

Granuloma Annulare

Granuloma annulare is a skin condition that usually appears as raised, reddish or skin-coloured bumps. The bumps form ring (circular) patterns, and are most often seen on your hands and feet. In most cases, granuloma annulare isn't itchy or painful. The condition is more common in women than men and the majority of those affected are typically children, teenagers and young adults. Granuloma annulare tends to develop gradually and can appear unchanged for many months.

What does granuloma annulare look like?

The most common type of granuloma annulare is the localised form of the condition, where bumps appear on the hands, feet, wrists, elbows and ankles. The bumps tend to be round or oval in shape and can be up to 5 centimetres wide. The centre of each ring may be dented or depressed inwards. This type of granuloma annulare most often affects young adults, especially women.

Some people have a more generalised form of granuloma annulare, where bumps are more widespread and appear on other parts of their body including the arms, legs and trunk. In these cases the bumps are often itchy.

Subcutaneous (under the skin) granuloma annulare is seen most often in children. The bumps appear as firm lumps under the skin rather than a rash. These lumps also tend to be smaller, about 3–4 centimetres wide.

What causes granuloma annulare?

The cause of granuloma annulare is not known. In some people, the condition might be triggered by a minor injury to the skin, for example insect bites, infections or even sun exposure. It may also be triggered by certain types of medications, for example, vaccinations. In some cases, the generalised form of granuloma annulare is associated with other medical conditions such as diabetes or thyroid disease.

How is granuloma annulare diagnosed?

Granuloma annulare is often recognised because of its characteristic appearance. If the diagnosis is not obvious, your dermatologist may take a small scraping of affected skin (a biopsy) to examine under a microscope and help determine the cause of the rash.



Granuloma Annulare on the hand

How is granuloma annulare treated?

In most cases no treatment is necessary, especially if the lesions don't worry you and are not itchy.

The lesions tend to disappear on their own within a few months or may take up to two years to resolve. There is usually no scarring but the lesions can recur. They often go away more quickly the second time than they did after the first episode.

If you are bothered by how the lesions look your dermatologist can prescribe medications that may help them to heal more rapidly.

A steroid cream can be applied to the affected area or steroid injections may be given into the lesions.

Small lesions can be removed using a laser or may be frozen using liquid nitrogen (cryotherapy).

Topical medications such as imiquimod, tacrolimus or pimecrolimus can also be used. Other types of medication or ultraviolet light therapy may be helpful for more widespread rashes.