

PERIORAL DERMATITIS

Perioral dermatitis is a condition more commonly seen in adult women and presents with groups of itchy or tender small red spots most often around the mouth. They spare the skin bordering the lips, but tend to cluster on the chin, upper lip and cheeks. The skin surface may become dry and flaky. The areas around the nose and eyes are also commonly affected. In these cases, the terms “periocular”, or “periorificial” dermatitis may also be used.

The specific cause of this condition is unknown, but in some cases, it is thought to be caused by oral contraceptives, lipstick, toothpaste, etc. It definitely can be caused or worsened by corticosteroid creams, but usually the cause isn’t apparent. The condition is not contagious.

The usual treatment for perioral dermatitis is oral and/or topical antibiotics. This is usually sufficient to clear the problem in a 4-6 week period. Occasionally, perioral dermatitis persists and needs longer periods of treatment. It usually doesn’t recur after treatment; however, there are occasional cases that recur many months or years later. In these cases repeat treatment is usually effective. While topical steroids (cortisone creams) may be effective for other rashes, it is very important that people with perioral dermatitis avoid using these creams.