Pityriasis Rosea

What is pityriasis rosea?
Pityriasis rosea is a skin rash. This rash usually affects people between the ages of 6 and 30 years. The rash has the following features:

- The rash often begins with a single herald or mother patch that looks like a large ringworm with a scaly, raised border and a pink center. It is one to three inches across.
- A widespread rash of smaller oval spots ¼ to ½ inch across on both sides of the body occurs seven to 14 days after the herald patch first appears.
- The spots are covered with fine scales, which give the rash a crinkled appearance.
- The rash appears primarily on the chest, abdomen and back. Often it is worse in the groin and armpits. Usually the rash does not appear on the face.
- The rash can be itchy during the first one or two weeks.

The rash is probably caused by a virus although nobody knows for sure. This condition is harmless. The rash disappears without treatment, but it may last for six to 10 weeks. There is generally no fever or any other symptoms of an illness with this infection. Pityriasis is not contagious. Your child can attend school and participate in gym class without any restrictions.

How is it treated?
In general, treatment is unnecessary. If the skin is dry, a moisturizing cream may be helpful. You may use Benadryl liquid or pills for the itching. This medicine is obtained over the counter at the pharmacy. You may use one teaspoon for every 25 pounds that your child weighs or one pill for every 50 pounds. Give it every six hours.

One dose of ultraviolet light (sunlight) can help stop itching and shorten the course of pityriasis. Have your youngster sunbathe for 30 minutes (enough to make the skin pink). Do this only once. If this is impossible, use a sun lamp or consider a tanning salon. CAUTION: Avoid sunburn.

What to watch for
Call your child's doctor for the following:

- The rash becomes more and more itchy.
- The rash becomes infected with pus or draining scabs.
- The rash lasts longer than three months.
- You have other questions or concerns.