



[Authoritative facts](#) about the skin from the [New Zealand Dermatological Society Incorporated](#).

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Intertrigo

Intertrigo is the word used to describe a rash in body folds. Affected skin is reddened and uncomfortable. Intertrigo is particularly common in those who are overweight.

Body folds (flexures) are prone to inflammatory rashes because of:

- Relatively high skin temperature
- Moisture from insensible water loss and sweating cannot evaporate
- Friction from movement of adjacent skin results in chafing

Bacteria and yeasts which are normally resident on the skin multiply in such environments and may result in further damage to the skin.

Specific infections

- [Thrush](#), caused by yeasts such as *Candida albicans*, is characterised by rapid development, with itchy moist peeling white skin with small peripheral pustules
- [Erythrasma](#), caused by *Corynebacterium minutissimum*, results in persistent brown patches
- [Tinea pedis](#) (athletes foot), caused by dermatophyte fungi such as *Trichophyton rubrum*, causes peeling, cracks, and blisters between the toes
- [Folliculitis](#), caused by various bacteria especially *Staphylococcus aureus*, is often provoked by shaving. Painful red spots and pustules are centred on hair follicles

Skin conditions

- [Psoriasis](#), recognised by well-demarcated patches and persistence. In other sites scaly red patches can be found, particularly on the elbows, knees and in the scalp.
- [Atopic dermatitis](#), usually first occurring in infancy. Very itchy dry areas are most often found on elbow creases, behind the knees, and the neck.
- [Contact allergic dermatitis](#) and [contact irritant dermatitis](#) – irritable rashes caused by materials in contact with the affected area, eg. [antiperspirant](#).

Less common causes of intertrigo include:

- Blistering skin disorders such as [bullous pemphigoid](#)
- Rare inherited conditions such as [Hailey–Hailey disease](#)



Intertrigo due to candida infection



Intertrigo due to erythrasma



Intertrigo due to psoriasis



Intertrigo due to seborrhoeic dermatitis



Intertrigo due to dermatophyte fungus infection

Investigations

Investigations may be necessary to determine the cause of intertrigo.

- A swab for microscopy and culture of micro-organisms (bacteria)
- [A scraping for mycology \(fungi\)](#)
- A biopsy may be performed if the skin condition is unusual or fails to respond to treatment.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the underlying cause, if identified, and on which micro-organisms are present in the rash. Combinations are common.

- Sweating may be reduced with a gentle [antiperspirant](#).
- Bacteria may be treated with topical antibiotics such as fusidic acid cream, mupirocin ointment, or oral antibiotics such as flucloxacillin and erythromycin
- Yeasts and fungi may be treated with [topical antifungals](#) such as clotrimazole and terbinafine cream or [oral agents](#) such as [itraconazole](#) or [terbinafine](#)
- Inflammatory skin diseases are often treated with low potency [topical steroid](#) creams such as hydrocortisone. More potent steroids are usually avoided in the flexures because they may cause skin thinning resulting in stretch marks ([striae](#)) and even ulcers. Calcineurin inhibitors such as [tacrolimus ointment](#) or [pimecrolimus cream](#) may also prove effective.

Related information

Other websites:

- [Intertrigo](#) – emedicine dermatology, the online textbook

Books about fungal infections:

DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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