

CHIGGERS

Definition

Chiggers (harvest mite, red mite) are the larvae of a type of mite found in tall grass and weeds. Chigger bites cause severe itching.

Causes, incidence, and risk factors

The mites are found in the southern part of the United States. They are usually restricted to certain habitats such as berry patches, tall grass and weeds, and woodland edges. The larvae attack humans around the waist, the ankles, or in warm skin folds. The itching usually occurs several hours after the larvae attach to the skin. The larvae can sometimes be seen in the center of a papule that has not been scratched.

Prevention

Avoid contaminated areas, if known.

Symptoms

- severe itching
- red pimple-like bumps (papules) or hives
- red (erythematous) skin rash or lesion on sun exposed area only
- skin rash or lesion with visible larva in the center of lesions

Signs and tests

Examination of the rash is usually sufficient to diagnose chiggers.

Treatment

The objective of treatment is to relieve the itching. Antihistamines and corticosteroid creams or lotions may be helpful.

Prognosis

This condition heals itself without treatment.

Complications

Secondary infection may follow intense scratching.

Calling your doctor

Call your doctor if there are signs of complications, if rash is itching intensely, or if symptoms worsen or do not improve with treatment.