

Prevention

# How to Get Rid of Heat Rash Fast, According to Dermatologists

Plus, how to prevent the symptoms of prickly heat from showing up in the first place.



By [Korin Miller](#) Jul 20, 2021



When the sweltering temps roll around, your body tries to stay cool by sweating. But beyond feeling uncomfortably damp and hot, that sweat can bring on some gnarly side effects if it gets bad enough. Cue the heat rash.

Heat rash is a skin irritation caused by blocked sweat glands, according to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). The true medical definition of a heat rash is a condition called miliaria, but people often use the phrase “heat rash” to refer to any rash that occurs in the summer after heat exposure, says **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, a cosmetic and medical dermatologist at Goldenberg Dermatology in New York City.

These angry, painful patches of skin can show up all over your body, begging the question: How do you get rid of heat rash? Ahead, dermatologists share the home remedies you can try to treat the rash, and how to prevent it from appearing in the first place.

## What does heat rash look like? What kind of symptoms does it cause?

Ife J. Rodney, M.D., founding director of Eternal Dermatology + Aesthetics in Maryland, says you may notice the following symptoms:

- Bumps
- Itchiness
- Redness
- Pain from underlying pustules

The bumps from heat rash can be itchy or prickly, Dr. Goldenberg says, which is why heat rash is sometimes called “prickly heat.”

Distinguishing heat rash from other rashes is difficult, since it can look like several skin conditions that tend to flare up in the summer, like eczema or hives. However, these conditions are “usually much more itchy” than true heat rash, Dr. Goldenberg says.

“You can look for small blisters and redness on the extremities or areas that are prone to sweat,” Dr. Rodney says. However, if a rash you’ve never seen before pops up in the summer and it’s painful or uncomfortable, it’s best to see your dermatologist for a proper diagnosis.

## What are the different types of heat rash?

The different types of heat rash are broken down by how deep the blocked sweat ducts are, says Dr. Rodney.

### ***Miliaria crystalline***

This is the mildest form of heat rash, and it impacts the sweat ducts in the top layer of skin. It causes clear, fluid-filled blisters and bumps that break easily. “Superficial heat rashes show up on areas where sweat is common like the head, neck, and upper torso,” Dr. Rodney says.

### ***Miliaria rubra***

This form of heat rash goes deeper into the skin and causes red bumps and itching or prickling in the affected area. “Sometimes, the red rash is accompanied by pustules,” Dr. Rodney says, pointing out that these are more common on the torso, between skin folds, or parts of the body where fabric tends to rub a lot, like the thighs.

## ***Miliaria profunda***

This is a less common form of heat rash that impacts the deeper layer of skin (called the dermis). “It happens mainly in tropical climates,” Dr. Rodney says. With miliaria profunda, sweat leaks out of the sweat gland into the skin, causing firm, skin-colored bumps on the arms, legs, and torso.

### **How to get rid of heat rash**

Heat rash will usually go away on its own, Dr. Goldenberg says, but there are a few things you can do to get relief if you’re uncomfortable.

✓ **Get out of the heat.** “Heat rashes tend to go away with a change in environment,” Dr. Rodney says. That includes removing yourself from the heat if you can and moving into an air-conditioned space.

✓ **Avoid tight clothing.** “If you’re prone to heat rashes, avoid tight clothing or clothing made of fabrics like spandex, especially in the summer. Stick to breathable fabrics,” like cotton, Dr. Rodney says.

✓ **Apply a topical steroid cream.** If you’re especially itchy, Dr. Goldenberg recommends applying a topical steroid cream like 1% hydrocortisone to tamp down inflammation.

✓ **Add a cold compress.** If you have miliaria rubra, Dr. Rodney says that using a cold compress on your skin may provide relief.

All of this, along with doing your best to stay cool, should do the trick, Dr. Goldenberg says. However, there is a small chance that you can develop a bacterial infection from heat rash (avoid scratching!), which would lead to inflamed and itchy pustules. If that happens, call your doctor as you may need antibiotics to clear things up.

### **How to prevent heat rash**

“With heat rashes, prevention works more than cure,” Dr. Rodney says. So how exactly can you prevent prickly heat? Limiting how much you sweat will help, the AAD says, but obviously that can be tricky in the summertime. These tip, per the AAD, can also lower your risk of getting sweaty, and thus, heat rash:

- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothes made of cotton.
- Exercise outdoors during the coolest parts of the day (early morning or evening) or move your workout indoors where you can be in air conditioning.
- Try to keep your skin cool by using fans, cool showers, and air-conditioning, when possible.

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