

HEALTH

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TCM: Rash moves

As the temperature and humidity rise, so does the incidence of heat-related skin conditions such as heat rash, also called prickly heat.

In western medicine, prickly heat is treated as an inflammatory skin condition caused by the blockage of the sweat glands. It's characterised by the eruption of small red papules accompanied by an itching or prickling sensation. If the rash is extensive and left untreated it can lead to heat exhaustion.

In traditional Chinese medicine, prickly heat is said to have a similar cause. Dampness and heat pathogens block the body surface, resulting in sweating and heat-regulation problems. The body can't maintain the harmony of *yang* and *yin*. *Yang*, being the stronger force in this situation, brings about excess heat, so treatment involves cooling the body.

TCM employs many cooling therapies to treat this condition. For example, to relieve itching, use a talc and liquorice root powder mixture (a 6:1 combination). Solutions containing

dandelion, honeysuckle flower or peppermint - or rubbing a slice of fresh ginger or watermelon peel over the rash - may prove useful. Standard oral preparations for clearing internal heat usually contain ingredients such as forsythia capsule, bamboo leaf, chrysanthemum, honeysuckle flower, sweet wormwood herb and Tokyo violet herb.

Help the body to keep cool by dressing in loose clothing made of natural fibres, and if necessary change outfits or bathe more often. Individuals who work outdoors or who are obese should try a cool drink made from smoked plum, hawthorn fruits, liquorice root and rock sugar.

Other common foods that can be used to counteract damp-heat in summer are mung beans, watermelon, wax gourd, kelp, tomatoes and coix seed, which are usually served as soups.

A lukewarm herbal bath is also good to refresh and prevent heat rash in summer. Prepare a solution with ingredients such as mosla

herb, cablin patchouli herb, eupatorium herb, perilla leaf (30g of each); peppermint, Schizonepeta herb, kudzu vine root and liquorice root (20g of each); golden thread rhizome (9g). Soak the ingredients for 20 minutes, then boil for 30 minutes.

Keep the bath water below 35 degrees Celsius, and soak in it for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, rub the body surface slightly. It's better to let your body sweat lightly

and bathe in the afternoon or evening. After the bath, rinse the body with plain water, then rest for half an hour. Drink water to replenish lost body fluids.

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**Before taking any
medicine, consult
your TCM or
medical practitioner**