



ITCHY skin can drive you crazy, but experts reveal the causes – and simple ways to relieve the maddening problem.

Dr. Ken Beer, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at the University of Miami, notes that the irritating tingling “is one of the most common reasons patients visit a dermatologist.”

While itching is often triggered by something in the environment, the causes can be complicated and difficult to diagnose, notes the founder of Scientific Skincare in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Here are six common causes of itching – and how to combat them:

1 Dry skin is the most prevalent trigger for itching, says **Paramus, N.J., dermatologist Dr. Rebecca Baxt**. It can be a symptom of menopause or the result of excessive washing. The best treatment is an ointment-based moisturizer like plain Vaseline petroleum jelly.

2 Tingly red “targets” on the skin are usually a sign of an allergic reaction to medication. A rash can appear hours after taking a drug that the body views as a foreign substance and produces an immune reaction. The most common offenders are penicillin or sulfa-based drugs. Use topical steroids to treat the rash and ask your doctor to change medications.

3 Intense itchiness can signal eczema, a disease that can last a lifetime and afflicts 15 million people in the United States. Dr. Jerome Litt, author of *Your Skin from A to Z*, says sufferers should

WHAT MAKES YOU ITCH – AND HOW TO BEAT IT



Itchy skin and rashes can sometimes be treated at home

avoid soap and rough clothing. Try gentle cleansers like Cetaphil, and wear soft, cotton clothing. Hydrocortisone creams can ease the discomfort.

4 Allergies to perfumes and nickel, a stabilizer in many cosmetics and personal care products, can cause red rashes and itching. If you get a reaction from certain creams or your ears get red and itchy from earrings, you will know what’s causing the problem. Prescription steroids can help the healing process, says Baxt.

5 Hives are “like having dozens of bug bites all over the body but without the bugs,” says Baxt. They can be a reaction to certain foods or a virus. The most common treatment is oral antihistamines.

6 Scabies is your worst nightmare, says Baxt. The intense itching, often accompanied by a mild rash, comes from bugs living in the surface of the skin. To get rid of them, apply Elimate cream overnight and wash all clothes and linens in hot water the next day. Repeat this in seven to 10 days.

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Update

Taking aspirin cuts cancer risk

+ASPIRIN has been praised as a miracle pill for helping prevent heart attacks – and now it’s being hailed as a cancer blocker. Harvard scientists say popping an aspirin every other day slashes the risk of bowel and stomach cancers by more than 40 percent. Specifically, women who took a 100 mg tablet on alternate days were 43 percent less likely to get bowel cancer and also had a 36 percent less risk of stomach cancer after 20 years.

Super food squash is an anti-inflammatory

+SQUASH is turning out to be a medical super food as recent research find the many varieties have anti-inflammatory benefits. Squash, which is actually a fruit although used as a veggie, includes summer versions like zucchini and winter varieties like butternut, buttercup, acorn, pumpkin and kobocho. Researchers note that squash contains C and B vitamins, potassium, manganese, folate, omega-3 fatty acids and fiber. It also has antioxidants and carries anti-diabetic benefits.

Watching scary films burns calories

+YOU can be a couch potato and still lose weight – if you’re watching horror flicks. The *Shining* burned on average 184 calories on test subjects. For *Jaws* it was 161 calories, *The Exorcist* – 158, *Alien* – 152 and *Saw* – 133. The scary movies rocketed their heart rates and triggered the release of adrenaline. Explains Dr. Richard Mackenzie of England’s University of Westminster, “Adrenaline is known to lower the appetite, increase the metabolic rate and burn calories.”