

# Under-breast soreness (Intertrigo)

## Breast Unit Patient Information

Under-breast soreness (Intertrigo) is a very common problem where moisture and friction can cause redness and pain in the under-breast fold. Although anyone can get it, it is most common in women who have large breasts or sweat a lot.

### Causes

The main causes are a sweat rash with –“skin to skin”- rubbing and moisture. Intertrigo can lead to a yeast (fungal) or bacterial infection of the skin, caused by similar yeasts that cause athlete's foot or nappy rash. Diabetes can also affect the skin making it more prone to fungal and bacterial infections.

Intertrigo is not dangerous but if left untreated, it may get worse and possibly spread to other parts of the body. In some cases, it can lead to a creamy coloured discharge with a pungent smell.

### Symptoms

- Soreness/discomfort
- Red or reddish brown rash
- Inflammation
- Itching
- Cracked or split skin
- Weeping skin with or without smell
- Discharge (often with strong smell)
- Swelling, sores or blisters

Symptoms can range from very mild, to moderate or severe.



## The most effective treatment is:

### 1. Prevention

- Wash the affected area regularly.
- Pat your skin dry rather than rubbing. You can also use a hairdryer on a cool setting to soothe and dry under your breasts, especially if you are larger-breasted.
- Avoid sharing towels and flannels to reduce the spread of infection.
- Wear a good, well-fitting and supportive bra. Cotton is better than nylon, which is known to make the condition worse.
- Change your bra every day.
- Losing weight will help to reduce the areas where skin folds can rub together.

### 2. Medical treatment

- If the skin is red, sore or itchy, ask your pharmacist for advice. They may offer an anti-fungal cream or powder to be used twice a day. **Do not apply if the skin is broken.**
- Once the infection has cleared, it is advisable to apply a barrier cream (e.g. zinc and castor oil) daily to help stop the infection coming back

**If none of the above treatments help or symptoms get worse, make an appointment to see your GP.**

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