



Chiggers

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Recognition and Environment

Chiggers are a species of mite and are a close relative to spiders and ticks. Chiggers are microscopic and are almost invisible to the naked eye. Once chiggers hatch from eggs, the mites feed on the skin tissue of a host before falling off and turning into adult mites. Found around the world, chiggers live outdoors on plants in wooded or grassy areas, typically around water. They are most active during the summer months when temperatures are hot.

Chigger larvae will attach to your clothing and move to your skin to feed. The chigger larva will release a liquid chemical into your skin to kill skin cells. The dead skin cells form a tiny straw for the chigger to drink your skin tissue. The chigger's chemical causes itching that is very intense for the first 24-48 hours before slowly going away over the next two weeks.

Working in Areas of Chiggers

Chiggers live in grass or wooded areas and attach to your clothing. You can get a chigger bite if you walk through an area where chiggers live, including:

- Overgrown fields of grass
- Wooded areas
- Gardens
- Moist soil near water
- Areas with high humidity

Chiggers will attach to your clothing and move onto your skin, where they bite.

Their favorite sites to feed are areas where your skin and clothing have close contact, especially at waistbands, bra lines, and sock lines, or where your skin folds. Common areas where chiggers bite includes:

- Ankles
- Lower legs
- Behind your knees
- Waist
- Groin

Preventing Chigger Bites

You can prevent chigger bites by:

- Wearing protective clothing when outdoors, such as long sleeve shirts, tall socks, and long pants tucked into boots.
- Before outdoor activities, treat clothing with insecticides such as Permethrin to repel insects and mites.
- Using bug spray or mosquito repellent.
- Avoid outdoor activities near grassy, wet, and wooded areas in the summer during warm temperatures.



First Aid

Because chiggers do not burrow into your skin and the rash usually starts after the mites have already detached from the skin, treatment specifically to remove the mites is not needed. Instead, treatment for chigger bites focuses on alleviating itchiness, including:

- Using topical creams or lotions such as Calamine lotion, use as directed.
- Taking Diphenhydramine or other antihistamines, use as directed.
- Applying a cold compress
- Clean the affected area of the skin with soap and water regularly.

The itchiness is most intense during the first 24-48 hours after the bite. Symptoms will slowly go away and stop after two weeks.

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following: lasting pain or itching, signs of infection, or fever.

Resources

- OSHA Fact Sheet [Rodent, Snakes, and Insects](#)
- UCLA Health [Flea, Mites, or Chigger Bites](#)



Chigger bites on ankle.

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