

# Serum Sickness

Serum sickness is a type of allergic reaction that may occur 7-14 days after you have been given an anti-serum or anti-venom. Serum is the clear fluid part of blood.

## Signs and symptoms

- Itchy rash - usually red with white wheals (hives or urticaria), which occur in batches or clusters.
- Joint pain - the joints may become swollen or red.
- Enlarged glands (swollen lymph nodes)
- Fever and viral-like illness
- The rash may last for days or weeks.

## Causes

Your immune system (which fights infections) may respond to a molecule, such as the horse serum in snake anti-venom, as being foreign and mistakenly think it is harmful. If you have had the horse derived anti-venom previously, serum sickness may develop more quickly.

## Treatment

Serum sickness will go away by itself. The rash does not cause scarring

Your doctor may recommend treatment, which may include:

- Medications, such as prednisolone
- Pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Cool compresses to relieve itch
- Antihistamines to relieve itch

## Key points to remember

This type of skin rash and swelling is an allergic reaction, which means the immune system responds to a substance as if it were toxic.

- Treatment options include ice packs, paracetamol, ibuprofen, antihistamines and corticosteroids.
- It will go away without treatment, usually over 2 weeks
- If it is not improving in 2 weeks, see your family doctor

## Contact Information

For more information or if you have any concerns, call your GP or the Victorian Poisons Information Centre on 131126