

# 7 Fascinating Signs Your Itchiness Is Actually A Larger Health Issue

By LAUREN DANA | a day ago |



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It's totally common to be itchy from time to time. However, if the feeling sticks around, sometimes that [itchiness can be a symptom a larger health issue](#). In other words, even something as small as a [tick bite](#) can turn into a serious infection, causing larger health problems down the line. For that reason, it's important to check in with your body and recognize when itching might actually need extra medical attention.

"Itchiness can be extremely serious or not serious at all, depending on its cause," dermatologist [Bobby Buka](#) tells Bustle. "It can result from something as benign as simple dryness or [matters as complex as lymphoma](#), a cancer that starts in the cells of your immune system." However, Dr. Buka says this is extremely rare, and that out of the [200,000 cases lymphoma diagnosed each year](#) in United States, up to 30 percent of patients experience itchiness.

While it is important not to panic because not all itchiness will have such an extreme diagnosis, try not to overlook your symptoms. If your itch does not go away after a few days, you may want to contact your doctor. From there they will be able to assess the issue, whether or not it warrants certain care, and treat you from there.

Here are some of the most overlooked signs that itchiness may actually be the symptom of a greater health issue, according to experts.

## **1. The Itch Is In One Spot**

Itchiness can be the result of a number of conditions, biologic or non-biologic. For example, Dr. Buka says that if the itch is localized, or restricted to one area of the body, "it is often the result of infection by bacteria or fungus."

As far as treatment for an infection caused by itching goes, Dr. Buka typically gives patients ultraviolet B light therapy, which can help reduce inflammation. Overall, though, Dr. Buka says it's important to get to the root of what's causing the itch, which your doctor can help with.

## **2. Itchiness In The Torso, Arms, And/Or Legs**

If you find yourself scratching away at your arms, legs, or torso, it could be the sign of a liver problem. According to dermatologist [Anna Guanche](#), "Liver disease, most commonly [primary biliary cirrhosis](#) (PBC), causes the bile in the body not to be processed normally. Increased levels in the body cause itching everywhere." Dr. Guanche also says that the itching can be very intense and uncomfortable, but the itching doesn't indicate how severe the liver disease is. It's important to note that PBC is pretty rare — approximately 65 of every 10,000 women suffer from PBC, and the condition becomes most apparent between 45-65 years old, according to the [American Liver Foundation](#). Dr. Guanche says most patients have itching in their torso, arms, and/or legs, but they do not have any rash.

### **3. The Itch Is In Your Eye**

If you find yourself scratching your eye a lot, you may want to seek medical attention. Eye itches, if left untreated, can lead to chronic infections and irritations, Ming Wang, MD, PhD, of [Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center](#), tells Bustle.

"Bad habits such as rubbing the eyes can lead to painful corneal issues such as a scratch or abrasion if the eye is rubbed too hard," Dr. Wang says. If untreated, these issues can unfortunately lead to tons of discomfort and vision problems, which may impact your daily life.

## **4. Your Itch Keeps You Up At Night**

If your itchiness is keeping you up at night, you may be suffering from eczema, which causes red patches and/or inflamed skin, [Dr. Emma Guttman of Mount Sinai Health System](#) tells Bustle. "Atopic dermatitis (or eczema) involves an itch that disturbs sleep ... it's an itch that is very bothersome and effects a patient's entire quality of life," Dr. Guttman says.

The only way to stop the itchiness is to decrease the skin inflammation. To do this, speak with your dermatologist or doctor to see which course of treatment is right for you.

## **5. Itchiness In Hands And Feet**

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According to Dr. Guanche, itchiness can be caused by B12 deficiency, which is most commonly related to a condition called [pernicious anemia](#). A person with this issue may have

"difficulty absorbing B12 at the gut level," Dr. Guanche says. Those who suffer from pernicious anemia often experience general itching, but areas with more nerve endings are most affected, such as hands and feet. However, Dr. Guanche says that the deficiency is rare in the United States and much [more common in developing countries](#).

## **6. Your Back, Arms, Head, Or Abdomen Are Itchy Almost Every Day**

Andrew Zaeh for Bustle

Itchiness can also be [related to kidney disease](#), and it's important to consider seeking medical attention in order to rule it out. Dr. Chirag Shah, an emergency physician and co-founder of [Accesa Labs](#) tells Bustle, "[Studies](#) suggest that the itching [from kidney disease] generally affects large sections of skin on both sides of the body and has a preference for

affecting the back and arms. Some people also experience it on their head or abdomen. Over time, the itching can migrate to and affect other parts of the body."

According to Dr. Shah, common patterns of itchiness that kidney disease patients face include daily or almost daily itching and the fact that the itching gets worse at night as well as with "variations in temperature, exercise, and showering."

## **7. Your Palms And Soles Are Itchy**

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Other issues with your liver may also cause other parts of your body to itch.



Dr. Francesco Maria Serino, President of [Doctors in Italy](#) (the Italian association of English-speaking doctors) tells Bustle, "Another common cause of itch is called '[cholestatic pruritus](#),' and affects those who have a liver disease due to impaired secretion of bile."

If you feel that something more is going on with your itchiness, or it is simply not going away, you may want to contact your dermatologist or head over to your local urgent care to rule out other health issues and get treated. Pay attention to subtle signs and symptoms, and note them to your doctor if the issue continues.

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