SKIN CONDITIONS like rashes are certainly not unique to individuals with primary immunodeficiency diseases (PI). While troublesome complaints of eczema or psoriasis frequently occur in people with normal immune systems, skin diseases are often one of the earliest visible symptoms of PI. And, as many PI patients have learned, certain types of rashes and skin conditions are also a side effect of intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) treatments. “A rash is a very common side effect of IVIG, and some patients develop worse rashes than others,” says Abbie Cornett, IG Living’s patient advocate. “If a certain brand of IG is triggering a reaction, it’s possible that switching to another brand could help. Taking premedications such as steroids or Benadryl before treatments can also sometimes reduce or eliminate some of the side effects.”

For PI patients who are bothered by recurring rashes, it may be helpful to keep a health diary that tracks any common patterns or triggers to devise the best treatment plan and minimize discomfort. Getting to the root cause is always the first step toward healing.

What Are Rashes?
A rash refers to any sort of inflammation and/or discoloration that distorts the skin’s normal texture or appearance. A skin rash may be characterized by redness, blisters, bumps, irritation, itching or a scaly appearance. Medically speaking, there are numerous types of rashes:

• IVIG-triggered rashes, which may appear as a blistering type of eczema, often begin approximately eight to 10 days after exposure to the medication. These skin lesions often resolve within a period of one to four weeks.¹

• Eczema or atopic dermatitis, a rash that primarily occurs in people with asthma or allergies, is often reddish and itchy with a scaly texture.

• Psoriasis is a common skin condition that can appear scaly, itchy and red, and is frequently found on the scalp, elbows and joints.

• Seborrheic eczema is a type of eczema that most often affects the scalp and causes redness, scaly patches and dandruff. It can also occur on the ears, mouth or nose. In babies, this rash is known as “crib cap.”

• Lupus erythematosus is an autoimmune disease that triggers a rash on the cheeks and nose. It is sometimes called “butterfly,” or malar, rash.

• Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease that can cause a rash to form on various parts of the body.

• Contact dermatitis, a common rash that causes redness, itching and, sometimes, small bumps, occurs when a person comes in contact with an irritant such as poison ivy.

Diagnosing and Treating Rashes
Rashes can be tricky to diagnose since some develop right away, while others appear several days after the trigger event. In addition, many rashes clear up on their own and can be treated with over-the-counter products. At-home treatments may include moisturizers, lotions, baths, cortisone creams that relieve swelling, and antihistamines that relieve itching.

Mild rashes and skin conditions that don’t respond to at-home treatments can be diagnosed and treated by a primary care provider or an immunologist. More severe skin conditions may require treatment by a dermatologist who specializes in skin diseases. Treatment may include local application of moisturizing lotions and steroid ointments directly to the rash. If symptoms don’t improve, the provider may prescribe topical ointments containing more potent steroids or other immunosuppressant medications. Rarely, oral or intravenous immunosuppressant medications may be needed to treat severe skin rashes and relieve symptoms.

Don’t Take Skin Rashes Lightly
Skin is the largest organ in the body, and when battling infection or responding to the stress of IVIG, it’s natural for occasional visible external reactions to appear. Because skin plays an important role as a barrier to bacteria and other organisms in the environment, severe rashes that ooze or bleed can serve as an entry point for bacteria into the bloodstream, and should not be taken lightly. If a rash does not respond to home care, is reoccurring and seems to be chronic, or is extremely itchy, painful or disfiguring, it’s wise to see a doctor who can help identify its cause and develop an effective treatment plan.

TRUDIE MITSCANG is a contributing writer for IG Living magazine.

Reference
**Topical corticosteroids (or just steroids)** treat rashes by easing redness and reducing inflammation and itching so that the skin can begin to heal. Cortizone-10 Intensive Healing Formula Maximum Strength Anti-Itch Crème is formulated to offer the highest-strength rash relief without a prescription. $6.46; walmart.com

**Calm Inflammation**

**Ease the Itch**

Benadryl Itch Stopping Cream formulated with 2% diphenhydramine hydrochloride topical analgesic and 0.1% zinc acetate skin protectant can soothe irritated itchy skin. The formula is a popular over-the-counter favorite to temporarily relieve itching and discomfort. $4.49; target.com

**Reduce Redness**

Skin that is red and scaly can leave a person feeling extremely self-conscious. Unsightly eczema and similar conditions can be treated with the Exederm Flare Control Cream for Eczema and Dermatitis. Topical application reduces redness, rashes, itchiness and inflammation. $9.99; bedbathandbeyond.com

**Ice, Baby, Ice**

Ice or cold packs can provide soothing, cooling relief for inflamed skin. An antimicrobial wrap like the Arctic Ease Reusable Cold Compression Therapy wrap can be used on-the-go, and works without the mess of ice or the need for refrigeration. $14.49; jet.com

**Natural Comfort**

Aloe vera is considered a go-to natural remedy for soothing rashes and skin irritations. Aloe is rich in natural vitamins and minerals that can help assist with healing and soothing the skin. Fresh aloe vera is best, but an aloe vera gel from the health food store can work equally as well. Jason Aloe Vera Gel: $8.63 amazon.com

**Shopping Guide to Rash Treatments**

**Relief in the Pantry**

An oatmeal bath is said to be one of the least expensive ways to soothe irritated skin, especially when dealing with rashes like eczema. One can be made at home by mixing three tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, one-quarter cup of baking soda and one-half cup of finely ground oats in a small bowl. Add the mixture to warm bath water and soak for 15 minutes to 20 minutes. A coffee grinder or food processor should be used to grind the oats to a fine powder before adding to the bath. Quaker Oats: $3.99 at grocery stores nationwide