



# Persistent Itching and Its Psychological and Social Consequences in Resource-Limited Communities

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## DESCRIPTION

Pruritus is a common symptom that affects individuals across many regions of the world, yet its impact is often underestimated in low-income countries where healthcare resources remain limited. The sensation of itching may appear minor when compared with life-threatening diseases, but persistent episodes can create significant discomfort and emotional distress. In many communities where dermatological care is scarce, individuals experiencing long-lasting itching often face daily challenges that affect sleep, concentration and social participation. Understanding the factors that contribute to chronic itching and its wider consequences is important for improving both dermatological care and public health awareness in economically constrained environments. In Kisumu, Kenya, many residents encounter environmental conditions that increase the risk of skin irritation. High temperatures, humidity, insect exposure and limited access to clean water may influence skin health. When people experience repeated itching, they may scratch the affected areas frequently, which can lead to visible skin damage such as redness, thickened skin and minor wounds. These physical changes may appear minor at first but can progress into persistent dermatological problems if left untreated. The causes of chronic itching vary widely. Some individuals experience itching due to allergic reactions or exposure to irritant substances such as detergents, soaps or chemicals used in agricultural work. Others develop itching related to infections, including fungal or parasitic conditions that remain common in tropical climates. In certain situations, itching appears as a symptom associated with internal medical conditions including kidney disease or liver dysfunction. Because healthcare systems in low-income countries often focus primarily on acute illnesses, the evaluation of persistent itching may receive less attention in primary care settings.

Psychological effects associated with ongoing itching can be substantial. When the sensation occurs repeatedly throughout the day or night, individuals may find it difficult to rest properly. Sleep disturbance frequently leads to fatigue, irritability and

reduced productivity during daytime activities. For students, constant itching may interfere with concentration in school environments, affecting academic performance. Adults working in manual labor or service occupations may struggle to maintain focus when discomfort becomes continuous. In addition to sleep disturbance, persistent itching may influence emotional well-being. Individuals with visible skin irritation sometimes feel embarrassment or self-consciousness when interacting with others. In crowded communities where personal appearance can influence social acceptance, skin lesions caused by scratching may lead to avoidance of public gatherings. This reaction can gradually reduce participation in community life and weaken social support networks that normally provide comfort during stressful situations. Cultural beliefs also influence how itching is interpreted in many low-income societies. In some communities, persistent skin symptoms may be associated with traditional explanations such as spiritual imbalance or environmental impurity. While these beliefs form part of local cultural systems, they may delay medical consultation when dermatological care is available. Some individuals attempt home remedies or herbal preparations before seeking professional evaluation. In certain cases, these treatments provide temporary relief, yet they may also irritate sensitive skin and increase discomfort. Healthcare accessibility represents another important factor in the management of chronic itching. In many regions of Kenya, dermatologists are concentrated in large cities, leaving rural populations with limited specialist services. Patients experiencing itching often visit general clinics where healthcare providers must manage a wide range of medical problems with minimal diagnostic equipment. As a result, treatment may focus on short-term symptom control rather than identifying underlying causes. Topical creams or antihistamine medications may offer temporary relief, but symptoms can return if the root condition remains untreated.

Economic limitations also affect the ability of patients to continue therapy. Even inexpensive medications may represent a financial burden for households living on limited daily income. When treatment requires repeated clinic visits or extended

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medication use, individuals may discontinue therapy once symptoms temporarily improve. This pattern can lead to cycles of improvement and relapse that extend the duration of the condition.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, Persistent itching represents more than a minor annoyance. In communities where healthcare access is restricted

and environmental challenges are common, the condition can affect sleep, emotional stability and social interaction. Recognizing its significance within public health discussions may encourage greater attention to dermatological care in low-income regions. Through improved education, accessible treatment and continued research, many individuals experiencing chronic itching could experience relief and regain comfort in their daily lives.