

FOLLICULITIS



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

An inflammation of the hair follicles. Follicles are where the roots of body hair grow. Folliculitis can involve the hair on the skin anywhere on the body. It usually affects the face (such as the beard area in men), scalp, legs, armpits, and groin area. A stye is folliculitis on an eyelid. Folliculitis can affect any age group.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Small groups of bumps (called papules or pustules) develop, usually with a hair in the middle of each bump. The bumps are small, and yellow-white in color, with a red area around them.
- Pain, redness, and swelling of the skin may occur.

CAUSES

Most often it is an infection of the hair follicles with *Staphylococcus* or *Pseudomonas* bacteria. It may also be caused by a fungal infection or irritation. Folliculitis may be superficial (on the surface of the skin) or deep in the hair follicle.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Recent illness such as a nasal infection.
- Diabetes.
- Weak immune system due to illness or drugs.
- Excess sweating (hyperhidrosis).
- Eczema or dermatitis.
- Skin injuries, abrasions, surgical wounds, or draining abscess.
- Shaving, waxing, or plucking hairs.
- Tight clothing.
- Poor hygiene.
- Obesity.
- Use of hot tubs or saunas.
- Use of certain skin care products or overuse of topical steroids.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Wash hands often to prevent spread of any germs.
- Frequent bathing. Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Wash towels and linens often to prevent spread of germs.
- Avoid risk factors where possible.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most cases clear up within 2 weeks. Some may take longer.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- May progress to other types of skin problems.
- Scarring may occur.
- Folliculitis may recur or become chronic.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Self-care is often all that is needed. See your health care provider if you have concerns about the disorder.
- Your health care provider can diagnose folliculitis by an exam of the affected area. A culture of fluid from the pustule or other tests may be done.
- Treatment involves supportive care of the skin and drug therapy if needed.
- Don't scratch the affected area. The germs can be transferred from under the fingernails to other parts of the body.
- Use warm-water soaks to relieve itching and help healing.
- Clean area with antibacterial soap. Shampoo daily if the scalp is involved.
- Avoid using oils or greasy-type ointments on the skin.
- If you shave, change razor blades daily or use an electric razor.
- If folliculitis recurs or becomes chronic, shaving may need to be discontinued for a period of time.

MEDICATIONS

- If there are only a few bumps, you may use nonprescription, topical antibiotics (such as mupirocin). Apply as directed.
- Oral antibiotics may be prescribed.
- A topical antibiotic drug applied into the front of the nose may be prescribed. The nostrils are a source of bacteria that can be spread to other parts of the body.
- Other drugs may be prescribed if a cause other than bacteria is diagnosed.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

No special diet. A weight-loss diet may be recommended for obese patients.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of folliculitis.
- You develop a boil or signs of spreading infection.
- Folliculitis recurs after treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page