



Balanitis

What causes balanitis?

Balanitis is an inflammation of the glans (head) of the penis. It may be caused by too much bacteria or yeast growing on the skin of the glans of the penis. It is normal to have bacteria or yeast growing on your skin, but when it grows too much it can cause problems. Balanitis can also be caused by irritation from chemicals in things you put on your skin, allergies to some medicines, and/or because of medical problems like diabetes.

What are the symptoms of balanitis?

- Pain and tenderness
- Itching
- A pink or red rash which may be smooth, scaly, spotty or patchy
- Unusual discharge
- Unpleasant odour
- Problems retracting your foreskin

Why does it happen?

Your risk of getting balanitis can increase if you:

- don't wash often enough
- wash too often
- wash with soap, body wash or disinfectants
- don't dry yourself after you wash
- have a small injury (caused by things like friction during sex)
- have diabetes.

What is the treatment for balanitis?

The best treatment for balanitis is good hygiene. Pull your foreskin back until your glans is completely uncovered. Wash the area each day with a soap substitute such as sorbolene, aqueous cream or a mild cleanser. These can be found in most supermarkets or chemists.

Usually you won't need medicine, cream or ointment to treat balanitis. Taking good care of your skin will allow it to heal and stop you from getting it again. If you frequently have balanitis, see your health care provider.



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Can I have sex?

Yes, it is fine to have sex if you have balanitis – as long as it doesn't cause you discomfort. You cannot transmit balanitis to your partner.

What do I do if my symptoms don't go away?

If you have symptoms that won't go away, see your healthcare provider.

If you need more information or have any questions, please contact the Canberra Sexual Health Clinic on (02) 5124 2184.

References:

Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (2017) Balanitis Factsheet.

<https://www.mshc.org.au/SexualHealthInformation/SexualHealthFactSheets/Balanitis/tabid/134/Default.aspx#.X73FaXduJaQ>

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