

SALINE WASHES

Saline (salt water) washes are helpful after treatment to soothe the skin, dry and protect from infection, and promote healing.

Either:

A

- 1 Put one tablespoon of salt in a bowl (1 litre) of warm water, soak flannel or kitchen towel, and bathe affected area for 10 minutes.
- 2 Dab dry - do not rub.
- 3 Then apply any given creams, eg, hydrocortisone or anti-fungal creams.

Or:

B

Salt Water Bath

Put half a cup of salt in a bath of warm water, soak for 10 minutes and dab dry as above.

Or:

C

Ready-Made Salt Water

Using the proportions, 1 litre of water and 1 tablespoon salt, make up the saline solution (dissolve salt in a little hot water to start). Keep handy in a plastic container, and use in the shower. It could be warmed by the cupful in the microwave.

SEXUAL HEALTH AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE CLINICS

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BALANITIS



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BALANTIS

Balanitis is an inflammation or rash of the head of the penis (the glans). Sometimes the foreskin (in uncircumcised men) is inflamed, reddened or swollen with a discharge under the foreskin (called balanoposthitis).

SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Balanitis is often itchy.
- ▶ The rash varies from individual red spots to a larger more generalised red area.
- ▶ The area may feel sore and swollen.
- ▶ Often the area 'weeps' producing a clear or yellow discharge around the foreskin.
- ▶ The redness may come and go.
- ▶ Some men find it is more noticeable after sex.

Circumcised and uncircumcised penises.

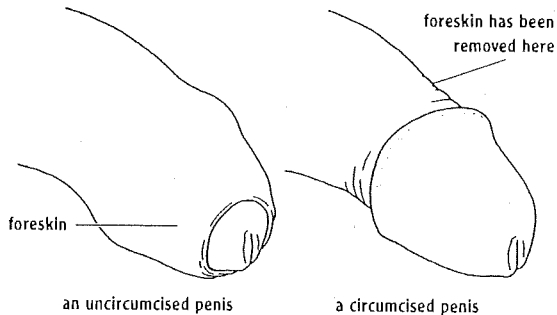


Diagram from *Your Sexual Health* by Dr. Jenny McCloskey, Elephas Books, Perth 1992.

WHAT CAUSES BALANITIS?

There are many different reasons for balanitis. Most causes are not sexually transmitted. Some of the more common are:

Candida (Thrush). This is a yeast infection which can cause an itchy spotty rash. Candida can also be found on normal foreskin without causing problems.

Chemical sensitivity - many different perfumes or chemicals can burn sensitive penile skin and cause a rash, eg, coloured or highly perfumed soaps, disinfectants, spermicidal cream in condoms.

Skin conditions - dermatitis rashes can affect any part of the body and can often occur on the penis. Sometimes the penile skin is the only area affected.

Poor hygiene - Secretions can accumulate under the foreskin if not washed regularly and can lead to an accumulation of bacteria.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on the cause of the balanitis. Thrush is normally treated with an anti-candida cream. Bacterial causes are treated with oral antibiotics. Salt water washes (see later) are also recommended and are often enough treatment on their own, as they soothe, dry and heal the skin.

Hydrocortisone cream can also be very effective in calming inflammation. Other anti-dermatitis creams are helpful in specific skin conditions.

In many cases avoiding strong soaps or chemicals is helpful. Soap substitute creams available from the pharmacist can be used to wash the penis.

PREVENTION

The genital area can get very warm and moist and lead to an overgrowth of bacteria or thrush causing the symptoms described above.

As a general rule, uncircumcised men should pull the foreskin back and gently wash any secretions away. Dab the skin dry before replacing the foreskin. This will help to prevent problems recurring.

The skin of the penis is very delicate, so it is important not to overwash it or put anything like disinfectant on which would irritate the skin.

If ordinary soap irritates the skin a soap substitute such as aqueous cream is available from the chemist (it isn't necessary to tell them where the sensitive skin is!).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

STD/Sexual Health Clinics are experienced in examining male genitals and treating genital conditions. Treatment is free and confidential. Your doctor can also help.

