



Balanitis and Foreskin Hygiene

Balanitis is an inflammation of the glans (head) of the penis.

It usually causes redness and/or a blotchy rash on the glans and inside the foreskin, sometimes with a discharge or odour. Balanitis may be itchy or uncomfortable but often feels normal.

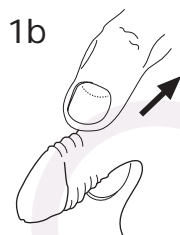
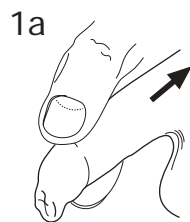
Why balanitis occurs

Balanitis is not sexually transmitted. Men do not 'catch' balanitis from women with vaginal thrush, or vice versa.

Balanitis results from excessive growth of organisms which are normally present on the skin of the glans.

The condition usually occurs in men who have a foreskin (ie have not been circumcised). The environment under the foreskin is warm and moist, and these conditions favour growth of organisms that cause balanitis.

This may be more likely to occur if you have not washed for a couple of days, or sometimes after sexual activity (vaginal, oral or anal – with or without a condom).



A common organism associated with balanitis is a yeast called *Candida albicans*. Balanitis can result from overgrowth of *Candida*, but it is important to remember that *Candida* is normally present under the foreskin in small quantities. In normal amounts, it doesn't cause any problems and does not require treatment.

Sometimes there are underlying conditions, eg diabetes or skin conditions, that make balanitis worse.

Management of balanitis

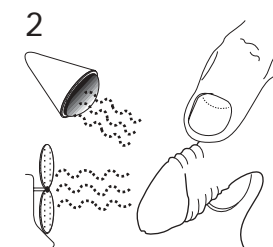
The aim of treatment is to keep the area clean and dry to make it difficult for organisms to grow under the foreskin.

Medication (cream or ointment) is rarely necessary, and is usually less effective than good hygiene. Partners do not require treatment unless they have symptoms. If this happens, they should consult a doctor to find out the cause of their symptoms and the best treatment.

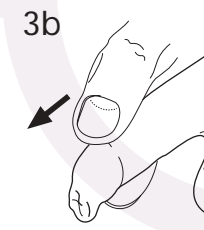
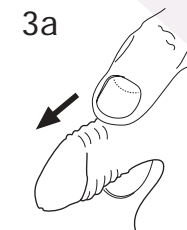
Once a day, ideally when you have a shower, slide your foreskin back towards your body until the glans is completely uncovered. (Figures 1a, 1b) Do not use any force. If there is any resistance or discomfort, check with a doctor.

Foreskin hygiene

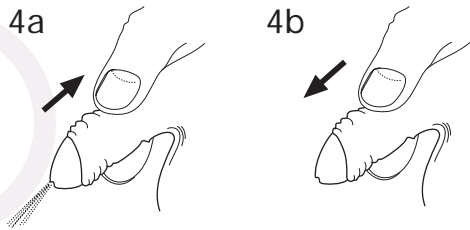
- Wash the end of your penis and foreskin thoroughly using warm water only *or* use sorbolene and glycerine cream as a substitute for soap (available from chemists and supermarkets).
- After washing, dry the end of the penis and foreskin thoroughly. If convenient, sit with the glans exposed to the air for 10 minutes. Use a fan or hair dryer for more thorough drying (Figure 2).



- After drying, replace the foreskin (Figures 3a, 3b).



- When you urinate, slide the foreskin back so that urine does not wet the foreskin (Figure 4a). After urination, dry the end of the penis and replace the foreskin (Figure 4b).



- If you are prone to develop balanitis a few hours after sex, wash the penis as described shortly after having sex. Make sure the glans is completely dry before replacing the foreskin.

These measures should lead to a rapid improvement in symptoms and help prevent balanitis in the future.

Recurrent balanitis

Because *Candida* and other organisms are normally present under the foreskin, it is possible for men to experience further episodes of balanitis. There is no treatment to permanently 'cure' balanitis or eradicate the organisms that cause it. If you experience repeated attacks of balanitis despite adequate foreskin hygiene, consult your doctor.

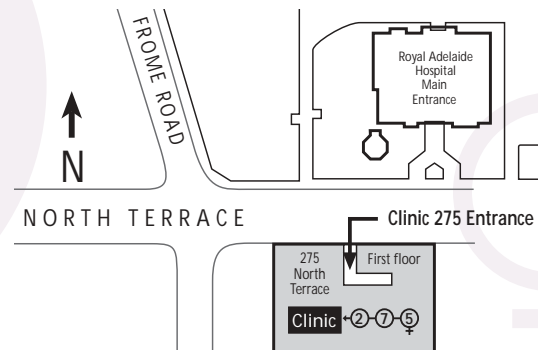
More information

STD Services web site:
www.stdservices.on.net/std/balanitis

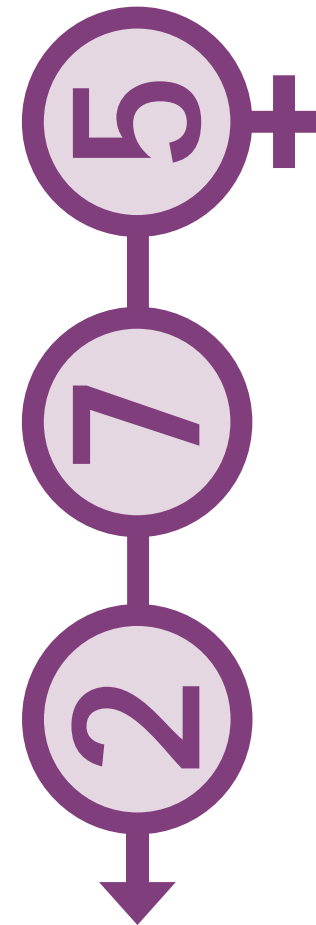
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STD Services June 2007



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Royal Adelaide Hospital

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No appointment necessary

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