

Balanitis & Balanoposthitis

Balanitis is swelling of the glans and head of the penis, and balanoposthitis is when the foreskin (or prepuce) is also affected.

Causes

Balanitis is most generally caused by poor hygiene in uncircumcised men. There are other causes and contributing factors:

- Infection (from bacteria, yeast or fungus)
- Irritants such as soaps or lotions
- Not rinsing soap off properly after bathing
- Poorly controlled Diabetes
- Less common causes are disease such as: Reactive Arthritis and Lichen Sclerosis

Symptoms

- Redness of foreskin or penis
- Tightening of the foreskin (if uncircumcised)
- Other rashes on the head of the penis
- Small red erosions (sores) on the glans
- Foul-smelling discharge
- Painful or Itching penis and foreskin

Treatment

The first step in treating Balanitis is to determine the underlying cause. If caused by a fungal, bacterial or yeast infection then treatment might involve topical &/or oral medications. If the condition is severe, does not respond to treatments or keeps recurring then the best option is circumcision which is surgical removal of the foreskin.

Prevention

The best way to ensure Balanitis is adequately treated and to prevent it from occurring in the first place is to practice proper hygiene. Always keep the penis dry, and wash underneath the foreskin to prevent bacteria from collecting, which can lead to infection. This is achieved through pulling back the foreskin to expose the head of the penis and washing gently with warm water. Avoid the use of harsh soaps as this can irritate the skin. Dry the head of the penis off thoroughly before relaxing the foreskin and returning it to its normal position.

Complications

If the disease is not properly treated in time, it may result in chronic infection or inflammation (swelling) of the area. This can lead to the following conditions

Meatal stricture: Which is scarring and narrowing of the opening of the penis

Phimosis: Difficulty & pain when trying to retract the foreskin to expose the tip of the penis

Paraphimosis: Difficulty replacing or moving the foreskin over the head of the penis Chronic inflammation can affect the blood supply to the tip of the penis.