

Lifetime Medical Associates *

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What is folliculitis?

Folliculitis is a common skin infection of the hair follicles or the skin surrounding the hair, usually caused by bacteria. When the hair follicle becomes infected, small white pus-filled bumps or pustules appear on the skin's surface. The surrounding skin is usually red or pink. While anyone can get folliculitis, the risk is higher in people who have poor hygiene, are diabetic, or have other chronic illnesses. The pustules can appear anywhere on the body.

What are the symptoms of folliculitis?

The most common symptom is a small pustule or pimple that is located around a hair follicle. It may be painful to touch and the surrounding skin may be red and itchy.



What tests are needed?

Your doctor can usually diagnose folliculitis by looking at the skin. Sometimes, however, your doctor may want to take a sample of a pustule for closer exam in a laboratory.

What treatment is needed?

Mild cases of folliculitis may get better on their own without any treatment. The affected area should be washed with an antibacterial soap and kept very clean. Sometimes an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment is used to help healing.

For more severe cases, it may be necessary to take antibiotics by mouth. These will be prescribed by your doctor.



Do

- Do use cool compresses to relieve itching and irritation
- Do try to keep clothing from rubbing against the pustules
- Do try to avoid shaving the area where the pustules are located, like your face and neck. If it is not possible, use a clean new razor or an electric razor each time you shave



Don't

- Don't scratch the affected area. That can cause the infection to spread
- Don't share towels, face cloths, and clothing as this can spread the infection to others



Recovery time

A mild case will usually begin to clear up in two to three days. In more severe cases, antibiotics generally heal folliculitis in one to two weeks.



What can be done to stop it from happening again?

Folliculitis can recur. Bathe at least once a day to help keep your skin clean. Your doctor may prescribe a special soap for you to use.

If you have diabetes or another chronic condition, you are more prone to getting folliculitis. It's important to follow your prescribed medical regimen and take good care of yourself.



Further information on folliculitis can be found from:

American Academy of Dermatology

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