

Fox-Fordyce disease is a rare skin disorder that primarily affects women. The disorder is characterized by intense itching especially in the underarm area, the pubic area and around the nipples. In Fox-Fordyce disease abnormalities affecting the apocrine sweat glands causes inflammation, and enlargement of the glands and the characteristic intense itching. Skin near an affected area may become darkened and dry and multiple, small, raised bumps (papules) may develop. Hair follicles in the affected area can become secondarily damaged, resulting in hair loss. The exact cause of Fox-Fordyce disease is unknown. Fox-Fordyce disease occurs primarily in women between 13 and 35 years of age. However, in rare cases, it can affect men and children and women who are post-menopausal. Some reports place the ratio of affected women to men at 9:1. The incidence of Fox-Fordyce disease is unknown. Heat, humidity, stress and exercise have been noted as exacerbating factors. In addition, Fox-Fordyce disease may be more severe during menstruation and tends to disappear (spontaneously resolve) during pregnancy. Fox-Fordyce disease was first described in the medical literature in 1902. A diagnosis of Fox-Fordyce disease is made based upon identification of characteristic symptoms (i.e., papular eruptions on apocrine gland areas), a detailed patient history, and a thorough clinical evaluation. Surgical removal and microscopic evaluation (biopsy) of affected tissue may be useful in obtaining a diagnosis. An experienced dermatopathologist will be necessary to correctly diagnose the disease from a biopsy.