

# Penis problems

If you've got a problem around your penis, you should go to your GP or a sexual health clinic to get it checked out.

Some of the most common penis problems are:

- itchy pubic area
- blisters on your penis
- spots on the penis
- discharge from the penis
- intense itching around the penis
- small fleshy growths
- inflamed penis head
- foreskin problems

Penile cancer can also affect the penis. But it is a rare type of cancer. It occurs on the skin of the penis or within the penis. It most commonly affects men over the age of 50.

Early penile cancer can present as an area of inflammation while larger tumours present as a noticeable lump on the penis.

## Itchy pubic area

Itchy red spots in the pubic hair region may be a sign of a pubic lice infection, also called [crabs](#).

Lice droppings can leave a dark-coloured powder on your skin or underwear. Blue spots, caused by lice bites, may appear on your skin.

You may notice nits. These are empty lice eggshells that look like white oval dots, attached to the base of your hairs. Pubic lice is usually easily treated with insecticide medicines. These are available in most pharmacies.

## Blisters on your penis

Painful red blisters that burst to leave open sores on and around your penis could be a sign of [genital herpes](#).

Genital herpes is a virus usually caught through sex. Many people don't know they have it because

there are often few or no initial symptoms. Although there's no cure, genital herpes can be effectively controlled using antiviral drugs.

## Spots on the penis

Spots or abnormal patches of skin on the penis could be a sign of [molluscum contagiosum \(MC\)](#).

The lesions are usually less than 5mm across with a central dimple. They're usually firm, raised and painless. They may appear in clusters. They may rupture to give out a yellowy-white substance.

Treatment isn't always recommended as MC usually clears up by itself. The virus is highly infectious. Squeezing or scratching the lesions could cause it to spread.

## Discharge from the penis

It's normal to produce some whitish or clear fluid from the tip of the penis when you've been sexually excited or first thing in the morning.

But a thick white, yellow or green discharge and pain when you pee may be symptoms of [gonorrhoea](#) or [chlamydia](#). Both are sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Both are easily treated with antibiotics.

If left untreated, gonorrhoea and chlamydia can lead to serious long-term health problems and infertility. If you've ever put yourself at risk of an STI, get yourself checked.

## Intense itching

Intense itching around the sexual organs that gets worse at night could be a symptom of [scabies](#).

Scabies is caused by tiny mites that burrow into the skin. Their bites can cause a skin rash, which can leave crusty sores if you scratch it. Scabies is mainly spread through skin-to-skin contact and it can take up to eight weeks for symptoms to appear. It can be easily cured using a prescription cream or lotion.

## Small fleshy growths

Small fleshy growths that are firm and raised with a rough surface could be [genital warts](#). This is a common type of sexually transmitted infection (STI). You should contact your GP to get it checked.

You may have a single wart or clusters of warts, with a cauliflower-like appearance. Genital warts are usually painless. But they can be itchy and unpleasant to look at. They're usually treated using prescription creams or by freezing with liquid nitrogen.

## Bent penis

A significant bend in the penis may cause pain or difficulty having sex. A bend in the penis could be a symptom of Peyronie's disease.

Other signs include a thickened area or hard lump in the shaft of the penis.

Various non-surgical treatments are available. But there's little evidence to support their effectiveness. Surgery is an option. But it's not recommended immediately as the condition can sometimes improve on its own.

Many men do not need treatment as the condition may not cause them any discomfort.

## Inflamed penis head

Swelling, redness and soreness of all or part of the head of the penis and lumpy discharge under the foreskin may be a sign of balanitis.

Balanitis is when the foreskin, head of the penis or both become inflamed and infected.

Causes of balanitis include:

- thrush
- skin conditions such as eczema or psoriasis
- germs building up under the foreskin
- poor hygiene
- unprotected sex

Treatment may simply involve practising good hygiene and washing with plain water. Avoid certain skin irritants such as perfumed soap, or using prescription creams if there's an infection.

Persistent balanitis that does not clear up after treatment should be seen by a specialist.

## Foreskin conditions

There are a number of conditions which can cause pain and discomfort around the foreskin of the penis.

They include:

- tight foreskin (phimosis)
- paraphimosis
- balanitis xerotica obliterans

[Circumcision](#) is sometimes considered a treatment option for these conditions. This is usually only when other treatments haven't worked.

### Tight foreskin (phimosis)

This is where the foreskin is too tight to be pulled back over the head of the penis (glans). This can sometimes cause pain when the penis is erect. In rare cases, passing urine may be difficult.

Topical steroids can be used to treat most cases of phimosis. These help soften the skin and make it

easier for the foreskin to retract.

## Paraphimosis

This is when the foreskin cannot return to its original position after being pulled back. It causes the head of the penis to become swollen and painful. Immediate treatment will help avoid serious complications. For example, restricted blood flow to the penis.

A specialist may rub a local anaesthetic gel on the glans. This will help reduce pain and inflammation. They may then apply pressure to the head of the penis while pushing the foreskin forward. In severe cases, a local anaesthetic gel is applied to the penis. A small slit is then made in the foreskin to help relieve the pressure.

## Balanitis xerotica obliterans

This condition causes tight foreskin. In some cases it also affects the head of the penis. The head can become scarred and inflamed.

Balanitis and balanitis xerotica obliterans can sometimes be treated using:

- corticosteroid ointment, gel or cream
- antibiotic creams
- antifungal creams

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