



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Zoon's Balanitis

Information for patients

This information is for people who have been diagnosed with Zoon's balanitis and explains what it is and what treatment is available.

What is Zoon's balanitis?

Zoon's balanitis is a benign (not-cancerous) condition of the foreskin and tip of the penis. It was first documented in 1952 by a doctor called JJ Zoon, although the exact cause is still unknown. This leaflet tells you about the condition and explains the effectiveness and risks of long-term treatment.

Signs and symptoms of Zoon's balanitis

Most men with this condition have moist orange-red areas on the underside of the foreskin and penile tip. A build up of moisture can lead to a discharge, which may be clear or yellowish. The discharge also has a characteristic smell (caused by skin bacteria called anaerobes). The red areas can become inflamed and broken (ulcers) in severe cases.

The condition is usually diagnosed by doing a punch biopsy. This is where a small amount of skin is removed with a special instrument after the area has been numbed with a local anaesthetic.

How will it affect me?

Zoon's balanitis is not infectious and cannot be passed to your sexual partner. Its appearance and the discharge, if present, are unpleasant for most men. Slight bleeding may also occur, but this is not a sign that it is becoming more serious. In fact, the condition can improve and worsen in cycles over many months or even years without treatment.

What treatment is available?

Soaking the area in warm salt water may help to reduce the moisture build up and even the degree of redness (inflammation). Mix 1 tablespoon salt in 1 pint cooled boiled water (hand hot).

Topical steroid creams with or without antifungal and antibacterial additives may also help, but if used for more than approximately two months, some skin thinning may occur. In some men, it is beneficial to have a circumcision, but this should be discussed with a urologist.

Tacrolimus cream, a treatment used in some skin conditions like eczema, has been used to treat Zoon's balanitis. However, this immune system suppressant is rarely used as it has been linked with development of cancer.

What is the long-term outcome of treatment?

Since publishing the paper on Trimovate Cream in 2001, Dr Tang has treated a number of men with excellent short-term success. However, such treatment may merely delay circumcision. Long-term use of steroid creams may also lead to skin thinning, which may be mild. However the thinning is not always reversible, depending on strength of steroid and duration of use. Thinner skin will look different and the underlying blood vessels will be more easily visible. However, skin thins naturally with age and recurrent inflammation can sometimes cause skin thinning too.

References

National guidelines on the management of balanitis www.bashh.org Plasma cell balanitis of Zoon: Response to Trimovate cream, paper by Dr. A. Tang, N David & L WL Horton in International Journal of STD & AIDS 2001: 12:302:1-4

Information for Health Professionals: Tacrolimus (marketed as Protopic). Postmarketing drug safety information from the FDA:

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/ucm126497.htm> (accessed 30 November 2011).

If you would like any further information on any Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) or to find out how you can reduce your risks, please ask to speak to a Health Advisor whilst you are in the clinic. Alternatively you can phone them on 0118 322 7202 during clinic hours.

Consistent use of condoms will reduce your risk of catching most STIs.

Department of Sexual Health
Florey and Contraceptive Services
21A Craven Road
Reading RG1 5LE
Tel: 0118 322 7202
www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/sexualhealth
www.safesex.berkshire.nhs.uk

Except for public holidays, the clinic is open:

Monday to Friday 7am – 7pm.

Saturday 9.30 am – 11.30 am.

The clinic is closed on Wednesday between 11am-1pm for staff training.

Newbury Sexual Health
Clinic
West Berkshire Community
Hospital
Benham Hill
Thatcham RG18 3AS

9.30am – 11.30am on
Saturdays (excluding those
with a public holiday).



We will endeavour to see everyone. However, if between 6pm and 7pm attendance is high, we may ask you to return the next day.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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