

Tips to a Better You



Tip #5 - Unusual Acne Conditions

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Genital Acne

What is commonly referred to as genital acne is actually a medical condition known as Hidradenitis Suppurativa. The visible appearance of this other condition resembles acne which is probably why the confusion between the two conditions exists.

What is Different?

Unlike acne, which involves the sebaceous glands, Hidradenitis Suppurativa involves a different set of glands – the apocrine glands. Apocrine glands are located in the groin area, under the arms and the nipples, and these glands can also become blocked. Perspiration is the culprit, much like it is with acne, but another contributing factor is the fact that sometimes the apocrine glands do not develop completely. When particles are trapped inside these glands and cannot get outside the body they end up being forced out into the tissues that surround the blocked glands. The end result is a painful infection and inflammation surrounding the area of infection that sometimes causes lesions to appear on the surface of the skin.

Besides excessive perspiration, which is common in this area, there are other situations that can cause irritation in the groin area and trigger this condition. Clothing that is too tight and that constantly rubs against the skin is one culprit, but some laundry detergents can also irritate the skin. If you suffer from Hidradenitis Suppurativa, you might want to try using a different detergent or even another body soap to see if the problem goes away. You may also want to consider using gentle or sensitive formulas of detergent and soap.

When to See a Doctor

If the problem persists and especially if the lesions are present on the genital organs, it's probably time to see a doctor. Unfortunately, genital acne (or Hidradenitis Suppurativa) is sometimes something more serious. The lesions can actually be a symptom of a sexually transmitted disease such as genital herpes or warts and have nothing at all to do with blocked glands. Yes, this visit will likely be uncomfortable and even embarrassing, but it's absolutely necessary to get the right diagnosis. That's the only way you'll be able to turn around this bad situation.

When the diagnosis is a mild case of Hidradenitis Suppurativa, you're in luck because it's easier to treat. You might have to switch to wearing clothing that doesn't fit quite so snugly. And just as with acne, you'll want to keep the affected areas free of bacteria and extremely well cleansed. If the lesions have a discharge

or are painful, they might have an infection that requires antibiotics. Extreme lesions may even need to be sliced open and drained, but this is only recommended for very severe situations and your doctor will help you determine the best course of action.

When this medical situation is under control, making a few simple changes to your cleansing routine will help keep this often painful condition from reemerging. As with any type of acne, gentle exfoliation is the key to keeping bacteria under control. The exfoliating process helps to remove dead cells so that they don't become a problem. Be sure to use a mild cleanser and to rub gently so the skin doesn't become irritated, but most importantly, follow your doctor's instructions.

Scalp Acne

Just about everyone knows what acne is and that it commonly breaks out on the face, chest, arms, shoulders and on the back. Acne also appears on other parts of the body as well as we've seen above.

If you think of acne as is a skin condition, then it makes sense that it might appear almost anywhere on the body...even your scalp. Unless you've had the misfortune of dealing with acne you might not recognize scalp acne.

Scalp acne (the mildest form of which is also known as scalp folliculitis) occurs more frequently than most people realize. This form of acne is most often triggered during times of high stress. This irritating scalp condition usually develops whenever the scalp becomes oilier than usual, such as when the hair isn't washed frequently or when hair care products that contain a considerable amount of oil are used.

Scalp acne is very itchy and that makes it difficult for those who have it to leave it alone. In its mildest form, the pustules are small, crusty, and they're sore. They appear mainly on the upper forehead at the hairline. A person can have just a few pustules or there can be many.

A more severe form of scalp acne called acne necrotica miliaris is characterized by inflamed larger papules with black-coloured crusts. This form of acne can leave behind scars that resemble those resulting from chicken pox. There is an even more severe form of scalp acne that primarily affects adult African-American men

and black men of different ethnic backgrounds in general. This extremely rare condition is a combination of large cysts and smaller pustules and papules that grow to be very big.

Treatment for Scalp Acne

The mild form of scalp acne can be treated the way most other acne is treated: keep the affected area clean by using a product that contains salicylic acid. Remember though that these products can cause excessive dryness so use them only on affected areas. For better control, apply using a cotton ball or a Q-tip.

Since oily hair is a contributing factor to scalp acne, using shampoo that is formulated for oily hair and scalp is another good option. Hair care products designed especially to treat seborrhea have also been used successfully. And since many people use more than just shampoo on their hair, it's a good idea to check the labels on all hair care products and make changes as necessary.

Never attempt to treat the more severe forms of scalp acne without first speaking to a doctor or a dermatologist.

One thing that should not be used to treat scalp acne is any product that contains benzoyl peroxide. The peroxide, when it comes into contact with hair, can change the colour of the hair and result in a less-than-desirable look. Those who have chemically textured their hair (for example those with perms) or colour-treated their hair are most prone to hair trouble when benzoyl peroxide comes into contact with hair.

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