Balanitis

Balanitis is an common infection of the head (*glans*) of the penis.

CAUSES

Balanitis has multiple causes. Frequently balanitis is the result of poor personal hygiene. Especially if no circumcision has been done. Without adequate washing, many different kinds of germs (*viruses*, *bacteria*, and *yeast*) collect between the foreskin and the glans. This can cause an infection. Lack of air and irritation from a normal secretion called smegma contribute to the cause in uncircumcised males. Other causes include chemical irritation by certain soaps (especially soaps with perfumes).

When no circumcision has been done, a frequent cause of poor hygiene is that the tip of the foreskin is tight (*phimosis*) and cannot be pulled back for adequate washing. Illnesses in other areas of the body can also cause Balanitis. This includes illnesses that cause water retention and swelling, such as:

- Heart failure.
- Cirrhosis of the liver.
- Kidney problems.

Other contributing causes include:

- Obesity.
- Certain allergies to drugs such as tetracycline and sulfa.
- Diabetes.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms may include:

- Discharge coming from under the foreskin.
- Tenderness.
- Itching and inability to get an erection (because of the pain).
- Redness and a rash is frequently seen.
- If the problem remains for a while, sores can be seen on the glans and on the foreskin.

If the condition is not treated other complications such as a scar of the opening to the urethra (tube that carries the urine out from the bladder) can occur and block the bladder. This narrowing is called meatal stenosis. Other problems can occur such as:

- Infection of the lymph nodes in the crease of the groin.
- Ballooning of the foreskin when voiding (when the foreskin opening has scarred down and been made smaller).
- Blockage of the bladder.
- Frequent urinary infections occur in children with balanitis.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Pull back foreskin to urinate and when washing.
- Pull back foreskin when putting medicine on the affected area to prevent the foreskin from swelling and being trapped behind the head.
- Keep foreskin and glans clean and dry.
- Sitz baths may be helpful.
- Use Antibiotics as directed - anti fungus medication (depends on cause).
- Pain medication, if needed.
- Circumcision (may be recommended).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The affected area becomes trapped behind the head.
- You start a fever.
- The swelling increases.

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