

FOLLICULITIS

WHAT IT IS

Folliculitis refers to inflammation of hair follicles, the small openings from which each hair grows.

CAUSES

Folliculitis usually occurs when the follicles are injured and then become infected with bacteria, fungus, virus or yeast. The most common culprit is the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus*.

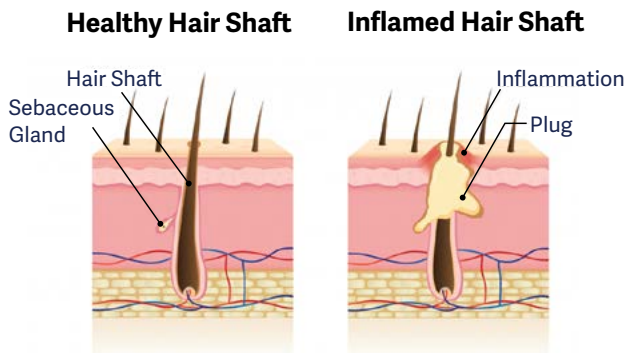
The irritation caused by shaving, waxing or friction from clothing is a common cause.



APPEARANCE

Folliculitis can occur on any part of the body where you have hair. Symptoms include clusters of pimple-like bumps around hair follicles, pus-filled bumps or blisters and itchy or tender skin.

Depending on the cause, folliculitis is also called 'hot tub rash', 'razor bumps' and 'barber's itch'.



PREVENTION

You can try relieving folliculitis tenderness by applying a warm, moist compress to the affected area and performing daily cleansing to the affected site. Should the condition worsen or not resolve within three days, see your doctor. Prescription treatment may be required.

Folliculitis tends to recur, but can often be prevented by the following measures:

Avoidance of tight clothing — skin can be irritated by scratchy or restrictive clothing (e.g. closed shirt collars, scarves or turtlenecks, stretchy workout fabrics). Bacteria can be trapped in the skin under occlusive or stretchy fabrics.

Shave less often — depending on the growth rate and curliness of one's hair, consider shaving less often such as twice weekly (e.g. Monday and Thursday).

Keep skin clean — avoid touching affected skin with dirty hands or washcloths; change underclothing and clothing daily and especially after physical activity that causes sweating.

Use clean hot tubs and heated pools — poorly maintained hot tubs can foster a certain type of folliculitis caused by *pseudomonas bacteria*. This type of folliculitis may require treatment with oral antibiotics.

SHAVING TIPS

Prepare the skin — Wash with warm water and soap to soften hairs.

Choose a lubricating shave gel — It will help protect skin from nicks and cuts.

Use a new blade — Choose a sharp, new blade each time you shave.

Forego the close shave — Choose a single blade over a multi-blade razor. Shave in the direction of hair growth. Don't shave back and forth in opposite directions. Try to avoid pulling skin taut when shaving.

Calm your skin — A cool compress or cool wet washcloth on freshly shaved skin can prevent irritation and limit swelling.

Minimize the formation of ingrown hairs — the day after shaving, consider the application of over-the-counter gel or lotion containing salicylic acid (1–2%) or glycolic acid (5%) to help keep skin around the hairs smooth and avoid entrapment of the re-growing hair.



Additional information on Folliculitis is available online.

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