

Keratosis Pilaris

Keratosis pilaris is a build-up of keratin or dead skin cells around hair follicles, causing a rough bumpy rash on the skin. The most common areas affected are the upper arms, the thighs, and the cheeks. Keratosis pilaris may also be seen on the trunk, lower arms and legs, and buttocks. The bumps are sterile and are not infected. When there is rubbing of the skin, such as against clothing, the bumps may appear pink or red. If friction is absent, the bumps may be skin-colored. The skin around the bumps may darken, giving a brown appearance. The appearance of the bumps may fluctuate or change over time, both with age and with season of the year.

Keratosis pilaris is not dangerous and does not make children ill. It is not a sign of a more serious disorder, although it is more common in children with sensitive skin. Treatment of keratosis pilaris focuses on very frequent moisturizers. More aggressive treatment is usually not necessary. Treatment does not “cure” keratosis pilaris; instead, it lessens the appearance of the bumps. Products to exfoliate the skin may be used for more severe cases.

Moisturizers include lotions, creams and ointments. Eucerin cream is a good example.

Examples of products that exfoliate (remove the upper dead layer of skin) include:

- Salicylic acid: use products with 2% - 6% concentration
 - These are over the counter and are available as creams, lotions, gels and washes. Neutrogena makes 2% products in many forms. Saalex is an example of a 6% product
 - Apply twice a day
 - May cause redness, burning, sun sensitivity (use sunscreen)
- Lac-Hydrin (ammonium lactate) 12%
 - This is a prescription product available as a cream
 - Apply twice a day
 - May cause redness, burning, sun sensitivity (use sunscreen)
- Tretinoin (Retin A) or similar
 - Prescription products often used to thin the skin of persons with acne. (keratosis pilaris is not related to acne)
 - Apply at bedtime to clean dry skin
 - May cause redness, peeling, sun sensitivity (use sunscreen)