

Do I need any tests?

Not usually. A doctor or nurse can usually diagnose balanitis by the red and inflamed look of the end of the penis. The commonest cause is skin irritation. In this case your doctor or nurse will give advice and treatment. The inflammation is likely to settle within a few days.

If another cause is suspected or the balanitis does not clear with treatment, we may suggest:

- Tests for sexually transmitted infections, based on your history.
- A swab to look for certain bacteria that can cause infection.
- A urine sample to check for sugar (if diabetes is suspected).
- Referral to a skin specialist if a skin condition is thought to be the cause.

What is the treatment for balanitis?

Treatment depends on the cause.

In most cases: Stop using soap or shower gel. Wash twice a day with salty water (not more often). Use a table spoon of salt in a bathroom sinkful of water, or half a cup of salt in a six inch deep bath. Gently pat the skin dry. **DON'T use disinfectant!**

Use emollient (soothing) creams e.g Epaderm®, Diprobase®, Hydromol® to soothe and moisturize the skin and for washing instead of soap.

If this does not help, a mild steroid cream (hydrocortisone 0.5% Or 1%) can be used

Other treatments

- An anti-yeast cream or anti-yeast tablets in cases due to Candida.
- Antibiotics will clear infection caused by bacteria.

Can balanitis be prevented?

Tips which may help to prevent some cases of balanitis include:

- Wash the glans each day. Pull the foreskin back gently whilst in the bath or shower. Then gently clean the glans using an emollient or an un-perfumed soap. Make sure the penis and glans are dry before you put on underwear. If symptoms are related to condom use, try using a condom which is designed for sensitive skin such as latex free (ask your pharmacist or sexual health clinic for advice).
- Wash underwear with non-biological detergents and rinse well.
- Wash your hands before going to the toilet if you work with chemicals which can irritate delicate skin.

If it keeps happening

- Discuss it with your GP or sexual health clinic. Sometimes a biopsy (small sample) of inflamed skin may be taken to look at under the microscope. This can help to find the cause. If you keep getting balanitis, especially if it is caused by a phimosis (very tight foreskin), then an option is to be circumcised to remove the foreskin.

(place HB contact details sticker here)