

CHRONICLE PATIENT PRIMER

A tool for patient counselling and adherence. Online at www.derm.city/primer

What is keratosis pilaris?

The skin condition is caused by an excess of a hard protein known as keratin, which exists in our bodies to help protect skin cells. A build-up of keratin can plug small hair follicles that can lead to the condition known as keratosis pilaris. We often inherit this type of skin from our parents through genetics. The skin condition is more common in children and teenagers, but can affect adults as well. Keratosis pilaris is usually harmless and symptoms are mild, but if itchiness or dryness persists, a doctor can recommend treatment.



KERATOSIS PILARIS

Overview

Keratosis pilaris is a benign skin condition. Sometimes referred to as “chicken skin,” it manifests as small, pimple or goose bump-like red bumps that are spread out in rough patches across the skin. Though these rough patches—which you will tend to find on your thighs, upper arms, cheeks, or buttocks—can become itchy or dry, they are usually not painful.

Treatment

Treatment is not usually required for keratosis pilaris, but some may experience symptoms of itchiness and dryness, which could require relief. Moisturizing lotions can help to soothe skin and clear up the bumpy appearance. Skin creams containing vitamin D, urea, lactic acid, glycolic acid, and other organic compounds are also recommended. Laser treatment or steroid creams may be prescribed in more severe cases. Home treatments usually work, but if the condition persists, it could be time to talk to a dermatologist. Often, the condition clears on its own.

Causes



Genetics



More common in people with dry skin



Other skin conditions such as atopic dermatitis

Your risk increases if



You are overweight



You have asthma



You have hay fever

KERATOSIS PILARIS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Though keratosis pilaris can be unpleasant aesthetically, the benign condition has no effect on an individual's general well-being or health.



Treatment with topical medications

A topical medication is a medication that usually takes the form of a lotion, cream, or gel, which is applied to a certain area of the body. Some are used once a day, though many can be used more often.



Exfoliants and topical retinoids

Many skin creams exist to treat keratosis pilaris and similar conditions. Some creams, like an exfoliant, will help to remove dead skin cells and are available over-the-counter. Other creams, such as a topical retinoid, may help unplug clogged follicles.



Moisturizers

A simple moisturizer or even petrolatum may be enough to soothe symptoms of keratosis pilaris such as dry skin. Look for a moisturizer containing lanolin, urea, lactic acid, or glycerin. Moisturizing creams can be applied after bathing or showering.



Laser treatment

Laser treatment is another option for the treatment of keratosis pilaris. Laser treatment works by targeting an affected area with vascular lasers. The lasers eliminate excess keratin and reduce dead skin cells. These treatments are usually done in multiple sessions over time.

