



A guide to...

Balanitis

Patient Information

Children's Emergency Department (CED)

Watford General Hospital



Your child has been diagnosed with balanitis

What is it?

Balanitis is an inflammation of the foreskin, and occasionally the head of the penis.

It is very common in boys and usually self resolves in two to three days. Most cases settle without any particular treatment, but occasionally it can become problematic with discharge and scarring.

Symptoms of balanitis

- Pain when passing urine
- Redness
- Whitish spots
- Swelling
- Pain
- Itchiness
- Build up of thick fluid
- Unpleasant smell.

What causes it?

- Poor hygiene leading to a build up of the natural oils and dead skin cells, otherwise known as smegma, around your genitals
- Irritation that has been caused by urine that hasn't been dried after weeing
- Irritation from soaps, shower gels or other products
- Bacterial or fungal infections
- Skin conditions such as psoriasis or eczema
- Irritation caused by boys pulling or touching their penis too much
- Sexually transmitted infections.

How is it diagnosed?

Identification of the cause is usually from history and physical examination. Occasionally, a urine sample might be requested to aid this process, or a swab may be taken.

Treatment

Treatment is dependent on the identified cause:

- Keep the penis as dry as possible
- Avoid excessive touching
- Ensure good cleaning with lukewarm water—no soap
- Occasionally, topical (cream) treatment may be indicated eg, antibiotic, antifungal, steroid or a mixed treatment. This will be dependent on the suspected cause
- Most cases of balanitis are caused by irritation and a topical steroid may be used to help relieve the symptoms
- Very rarely, your child may require oral antibiotics
- Referral to a sexual health clinic may be indicated.

Care of your child

- Ensure your child drinks plenty of clear fluids
- Encourage your child you regularly pass urine
- Teach your child to clean their penis thoroughly when in the bath / shower; encourage them to gently retract the foreskin If able (NOT more than is comfortable) to remove the build up smegma that can collect underneath
- Remind your child to ensure their penis is dried after weeing.
- If you have been prescribed a topical treatment, ensure that the treatment course is completed in full
- If you are concerned about recurrent episodes, see your GP for review.

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217 187** or email **westherts.pals@nhs.uk**



Author	Sian Edwards
Department	Children's Emergency Department
Ratified / Review Date	January 2025 / January 2028
ID Number	40/2356/V1

