



[Authoritative facts](#) about the skin from the [New Zealand Dermatological Society Incorporated](#).

[Home](#) | [Genital skin problems](#) |  [Pearly penile papules: PDF 68 KB](#)

## Pearly penile papules

### What are pearly penile papules?

Pearly penile papules are small dome-shaped to thread-like skin-coloured bumps that are typically located on the sulcus or corona of the glans penis. The papules are commonly arranged all the way around the head of the penis in one or several rows.

Penile papules have been reported to be present in between 8% and 43% of men. They are more common in men that have not been circumcised. They become less apparent with increased age.

[Images of pearly penile papules](#)

### What are the symptoms of pearly penile papules?

The papules do not cause any symptoms but patients are often anxious as to their nature.

### What is the cause of pearly penile papules?

Penile papules are a normal anatomic variant. They are not due to sexual activity or lack of hygiene. They are not infectious or contagious, unlike [genital warts](#). They are not malignant or pre-malignant.

### Investigations

The lesions are usually diagnosed by their clinical appearance so no specific tests are required. They can usually be readily distinguished from other lesions found on the penis, including viral warts, [molluscum contagiosum](#) and ectopic sebaceous glands ([Fordyce spots](#)).

Pearly penile papule show a typical appearance under the dermatoscope.

[Skin biopsy](#) of pearly penile papules has characteristic microscopic features. There is a variable number of thin-walled dilated blood vessels in the dermis with a proliferation of fibroblast cells which may be star-shaped or have multiple nuclei. Concentric fibrosis may also be found around skin appendage structures.

### Management

Patients should be reassured as to the nature of the lesions. Treatment is not necessary. If treatment is desired, carbon dioxide laser vaporisation or electro-surgery may destroy the lesions but they may be replaced by scarring.

*Draft 15 June 2008*

#### Related information

#### References:

On DermNet NZ:

Other websites:

- [Pearly penile papules](#) - emedicine dermatology

**Books about skin diseases:**

See the [DermNet NZ bookstore](#)

**Author:** Dr Mark Duffill, Dermatologist, Hamilton, New Zealand

DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

Created 2008. Last updated 15 Jun 2008. © 2008 NZDS. Disclaimer.