

Keratosis Pilaris

What is it?

Keratosis pilaris is a very common form of dry skin where the hair follicles get blocked by dead skin cells (keratin) that don't shed normally. It causes bumpy "chicken skin" mostly on the upper arms, but often also on the thighs, buttocks and cheeks. It is common in people with atopic dermatitis (eczema).



How can we treat it?

Keratosis pilaris is an inherited skin condition and so it is not curable. The skin appearance and texture can be improved with treatments that help remove the dead skin cells that are blocking the hair follicles.

These treatments are:

- ✓ Gentle exfoliation with an exfoliating glove a few times per week.
- ✓ Using an exfoliating moisturiser – these contain urea, salicylic acid or alpha-hydroxy acids.
- ✓ Using a prescription topical retinoid cream.

These treatments need to be continued long-term to have an ongoing benefit. If it is severe, vascular laser can be used to help with the redness and sometimes hair-removal laser can also be helpful.

How can we keep our skin healthy?

Bathing/showering:

- ✓ Use warm (not hot) water and keep it short (less than 5 minutes).
- ✓ Use a soap-free wash, it is less drying and more gentle than soap.

Keep the skin moisturised:

- ✓ Moisturise the skin every day using a cream or ointment.
- ✓ The best time to moisturise is within 2 minutes of showering, onto damp skin.
- ✓ Apply the moisturiser in the direction of the hair follicles (i.e. down the arms/legs).



Your skin care plan:

Want more information?

dermnetnz.org

dermcoll.edu.au/a-to-z-of-skin

This factsheet was developed as part of the Koolungar Moorditj Healthy Skin Project.