FOLLICULITIS

DESCRIPTION
An inflammation of the hair follicles. Folliculitis can involve the hair on the body or scalp, face, and axillae. A sty is folliculitis on an eyelid. Folliculitis can affect any age group.

PREVIOUS SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS
- Small groups of bumps (called papules or pustules) develop, usually with a hair in the middle of each bump. The bumps are small and yellow-white in color, with a red area around them.
- Pain, redness, and swelling of the skin may occur.

CAUSES
Most often it is an infection of the hair follicles with Staphylococcus or Pseudomonas bacteria. It may also be caused by a fungal infection or irritation. Folliculitis may be superficial (on the surface of the skin) or deep in the hair follicle.

RISK INCREASES WITH
- Recent illness such as a viral infection.
- Diabetes.
- Weak immune system due to illness or drugs.
- Excess sweating (hyperhidrosis).
- Eczema or dermatitis.
- Skin injuries, abrasions, surgical wounds, or draining abscess.
- Shaving, waxing, or plucking hairs.
- Tight clothing.
- Poor hygiene.
- Obesity.
- Use of hot tubs or saunas.
- Use of certain skin care products or overuse of topical steroids.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES
- Wash hands often to prevent spread of any germs.
- Frequent bathing. Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Wash towels and linens often to prevent spread of germs.
- Avoid risk factors where possible.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Most cases clear up within 2 weeks. Some may take longer.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS
- May progress to other types of skin problems.
- Scarring may occur.
- Folliculitis may recur or become chronic.

DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES
- Self-care is often all that is needed. See your health care provider if you have concerns about the disorder.
- Your health care provider can diagnose folliculitis by an exam of the affected area. A culture of fluid from the pimple or other lesion may be done.
- Treatment involves supportive care of the skin and drug therapy if needed.
- Don’t scratch the affected area. The germs can be transferred from under the fingernails to other parts of the body.
- Use warm-water soaks to relieve itching and help healing.
- Clean area with antibacterial soap. Shampoo daily if the scalp is involved.
- Avoid using call or great-nape shaving cream on the skin.
- If you shave, change razor blades daily or use an electric razor.
- If folliculitis recurs or becomes chronic, shaving may need to be discontinued for a period of time.

MEDICATIONS
- If there are only a few bumps, you may use nonprescription, topical antibiotics (such as mupirocin). Apply as directed.
- Oral antibiotics may be prescribed.
- A topical antibiotic drug applied to the front of the nose may be prescribed. The nostrils are a source of bacteria that can spread to other parts of the body.
- Other drugs may be prescribed if a cause other than bacteria is diagnosed.

ACTIVITY
No limits.

DIET
No special diet. A weight-loss diet may be recommend for obese patients.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF
- You or a family member have symptoms of folliculitis.
- You develop a boil or signs of spreading infection.
- Folliculitis recurs after treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page