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## Fordyce spots <sup>[1]</sup>

Hi Alice,

I have Fordyce spots on my penis and some of them are really bad.

I'm 16 years old, is there any treatment I can use to remove the spots?

Thank you.

### **Answer**

Dear Reader,

Becoming acquainted with what's going on "down under" is a great way to keep an eye on any changes that may occur. Fordyce spots happen when the sebaceous gland (the glands responsible for secreting the oil for the hair and skin) are clogged. The good news is that Fordyce spots are typically harmless and often go away on their own. Also, they are non-transmissible, so you cannot pass them onto a partner during sexual activity. They typically become more visible during puberty (and occurrences tend to increase with age) and appear as red, yellow, or white raised bumps on the facial lips or genitalia in both men and women. About 50 to 80 percent of all people have them, making them quite common.

Back to your question about the Fordyce spots on your penis: Firstly, if you have not had them diagnosed by a health care provider, you may want to schedule a visit so that s/he can rule out anything more serious. Most Fordyce spots are asymptomatic; however, some men report that the spots on their penis are itchy or uncomfortable during sexual activity. Also, they may bleed if irritated or during sexual activity. It's good to note though that they are considered benign. The spots may be easier to see during an erection when the skin is stretched (revealing what looks like a lump), and they may let out a chalky discharge if squeezed.

Because Fordyce spots are not considered harmful, the only reason to treat this dermatological condition is aesthetic. Treatment options for Fordyce spots on the penis all come with potential side effects (including redness, painful swelling, and scarring), so many doctors advise against treatment altogether. Available treatments that have been used by some to treat spots on the penis include:

- **Surgical excisions:** by way of an outpatient procedure that requires general anesthesia
- **Laser therapy:** using carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) to remove the spots
- **Cryotherapy:** freezing (and thereby getting rid of) the spots by applying liquid nitrogen
- **Photodynamic therapy:** destroying the spots through a combination of a special blend of medicine and light therapy
- **Topical treatment:** using different types of acid to remove the spots

As these treatments may come with side effects, you may want to talk with your health care provider. S/he may be able to help you decide how to best treat this issue. Though these spots are causing you some distress, it may be reassuring to remember that these spots are not only harmless but also common!

Alice!

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Published date:

Nov 13, 2014

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