

Groin chafes during exercise ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I am a physically active, healthy, clean, twenty-three-year-old, white, male, Columbia grad student. Recently I have taken to reading your site, and believe you can help with my very annoying problem, which prevents me from being as physically active as I want to be. The problem is, when I dance, run, hike in the mountains, play soccer, or perform any other prolonged physical activity, I chafe in the groin area. And if I don't stop the activity pretty soon after the chafing starts, the chafing gets so bad that sometimes it hurts to walk. Some things I have tried have been: using baby powder, trying different brands of underwear, even wearing no underwear(!), but nothing seems to help. What I would like to know is whether this is a common problem and whether there are ways to rid oneself of this curse. Thanks in advance, ma'am!

Signed,
Chafing to Death

Answer

Dear Chafing to Death,

As Hamlet might say if he were alive today, "To run, perchance to chafe. Ay, there's the rub."

Chafing, caused by sweaty skin rubbing against more skin or clothing, is a common problem for both men and women sportsters. The skin around the groin, inner thighs, underarms, and nipples gets the most friction and is most prone to irritation. The talcum powder you have tried is one way to keep skin dry for light physical activity. Cornstarch and potato starch are other options. For heavier workouts, in which it's impossible to stay dry, these suggestions may help reduce being rubbed raw:

- **Drink Up.** Being well hydrated before, during, and after workouts allows the body to sweat freely so that salts from perspiration don't evaporate into crusty crystals that can irritate skin.
- **Lube Up.** Dry or unmoisturized skin rubbing against more of the same for long periods of time can get sore or hurt whether you're working out, or making out. Lubricants promote a frictionless glide. For example, many runners swear by petroleum jelly because it won't sweat off since it's non-water based (which makes it a BAD idea for use as a sex lube — it

can eat through condoms). Non-petroleum based body lubricants are also available in sports shops. Lube can be used on feet to prevent blisters from forming, too.

- **Gear Up.** Pick shorts and other workout gear that's neither too tight nor too loose (FYI — skipping underwear and letting it all hang free goes in the too loose category). Avoid cotton, which gets soaked with sweat and stays damp. Instead, choose synthetic fabrics, such as spandex or Lycra, that wick sweat off the skin for a more comfortable feel. For instance, some men wear bike shorts or spandex underwear beneath running gear for an extra layer of protection.

Experimenting with a greater variety of outfits, and adding some lube and quenching refreshment to the mix, can help you find a chafe-free combination and relief. If you still have a problem, here are a couple of other possibilities. People who are very overweight tend to have more chafing in the intertriginous areas, where the skin is touching itself. If this is the case, weight loss could help minimize contact and, therefore, the chafing. To treat the associated irritation, dermatologists suggest keeping the affected skin moist, not necessarily with water, but by applying ointments, such as bacitracin ointment. Petroleum jelly sometimes can be helpful as well. The ointment acts as a protective layer, allowing the skin underneath to repair itself better. You can stop using the ointment once the skin has completely healed.

If, however, you notice a red rash that's scaly around the edges, that seems to get worse while exercising, and that won't go away after you stop exercising, jock itch may be the chafing culprit. See a health care provider if this or maybe another condition is a possibility.

Wishing you relief,

Alice!

Category:

[Nutrition & Physical Activity](#) ^[2]

[Fitness](#) ^[3]

[Safety & Injury Prevention](#) ^[4]

Related questions

[Dry skin?](#) ^[5]

[Tremendous testicles](#) ^[6]

[What to drink before, during, and after physical activity](#) ^[7]

[Sports bras to help stabilize rocking breasts?](#) ^[8]

Published date:

Jun 01, 2001

Last reviewed on:

Oct 17, 2013

Footer menu

▼ [Contact Alice!](#)

◦ [Content Use](#)

- [Media Inquiries](#)
- [Comments & Corrections](#)
- ▼ [Syndication & Licensing](#)
 - [Licensing Q&As](#)
 - [Get Alice! on Your Website](#)
 - [Full Site Syndication](#)
 - [Link to Go Ask Alice!](#)

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please [visit our Emergency page](#) to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/groin-chafes-during-exercise#comment-0>

Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/groin-chafes-during-exercise>
- [2] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/nutrition-physical-activity>
- [3] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/fitness>
- [4] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/safety-injury-prevention>
- [5] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/dry-skin-0>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/tremendous-testicles>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/what-drink-during-and-after-physical-activity>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/sports-bras-help-stabilize-rocking-breasts>