



Dome-shaped Penile Papules

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A 24-year-old male presents with asymptomatic lesions on his penis. He thinks they are spreading; he had a sexual encounter without a condom and is quite anxious. He visits different STD clinics, but the work-up thus far has been negative.

1. What is the most likely diagnosis?

- Human papillomavirus
- Herpes simplex virus
- Pearly penile papules
- Tinea penii
- Fordyce's spots

2. What per cent of men have these lesions?

- 1%
- 5%
- 15%
- 50%
- 75%

3. How might you manage this condition?

- Electrosurgery
- CO₂ laser ablation
- Reassure as to its benign nature
- Liquid nitrogen cryosurgery
- All of the above

Pearly penile papules are asymptomatic, dome-shaped, flesh-coloured papules located on the corona of the glans penis. The papules are arranged all the way around the head of the penis in one to three rows. These lesions are found in 8 to 43% of men and are more common in uncircumcised men. They are considered a variant of normal. For some reason, they become less noticeable with age.

Many men who have noticed these lesions become worried that they have acquired something through



sexual contact and will often visit STD clinics for a work-up. The main concern is genital warts. The diagnosis is clinical, although a biopsy can be performed that gives characteristic histologic features.

The main management option is to reassure the patient that this is not an infectious condition and that treatment is merely cosmetic, but it should also be considered for psychological reasons. Most commonly, electrosurgery can be performed, and, less commonly, CO₂ laser ablation or liquid nitrogen cryotherapy can be offered. Lesions may recur, and new lesions may develop, so patients should be properly educated about this condition before embarking on treatment. **Dx**

Answers: 1-c; 2-c; 3-e

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