

Pearly Penile Papules

A 17-year-old male presented with a 4-year history of asymptomatic, fleshy, spiny papules around the coronal rim of the glans penis (**Figure**). The patient was uncircumcised and there was no history of venereal exposure. Physical examination revealed several rows of 2-3 mm pearly fleshy, warty, papules located circumferentially over the corona of the glans penis.

Pearly penile papules are small, smooth, dome-shaped, flesh-colored, pearly white, or pinkish papules.¹ The lesions range from 1-2 mm in width and 1-4 mm in length.¹ They are usually uniform in size and shape and are symmetrically distributed. The papules occur in a single row or multiple rows circumferentially around the corona and sulcus of the penis. They tend to be more prominent on the dorsum of the corona and less prominent toward the frenum.¹ The papules are asymptomatic and do not affect sexual intercourse.

Pearly penile papules usually develop in postpubertal males, with a peak in the second and third decades of life.² The incidence has been estimated from 8%-30% in postpubertal males. The incidence is higher in blacks and uncircumcised men.^{2,3}

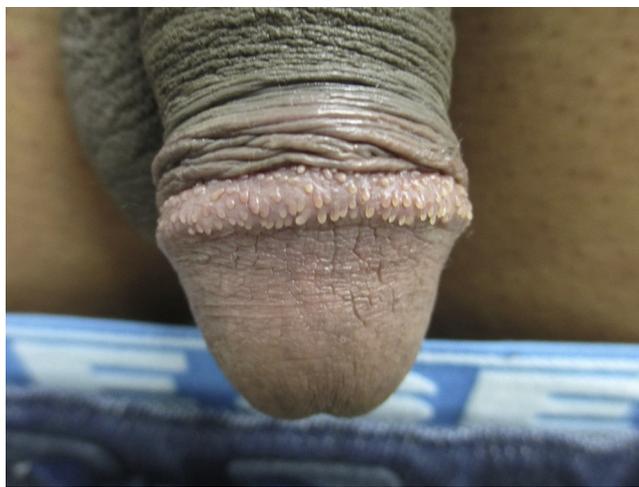


Figure. Pearly white papules oriented in a few rows on the corona of the penis.

A skin biopsy should be considered if the diagnosis is in doubt. Histologic findings include a centrally thin and peripheral acanthotic epidermis, mild orthokeratosis, and dilatation of vascular space surrounded by dense connective tissue.⁴

Pearly penile papules are benign and noninfectious. However, the lesions can be a source of anxiety because of their appearance or because of misdiagnosis as sexually transmitted diseases such as genital warts.

Patients can be reassured of the benign nature of the condition and that the lesions tend to regress in older patients.⁵ Treatment is usually not necessary but may be considered for psychological and/or cosmetic reasons. Treatment modalities include cryotherapy, electrodesiccation, laser therapy.^{2,3,6} ■

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