



**What is folliculitis?** Folliculitis is an inflammation of the hair follicles that results in red bumps that are often itchy and/or painful and can become filled with pus. While folliculitis can develop on any area of the body that grows hair, it most commonly appears on the chest, back, buttocks and thighs.

**What causes folliculitis?** There are several different causes of folliculitis:

- **Irritation** – This results from shaving, plucking, or waxing hair. As it re-grows, the hairs become ingrown and cause inflammation, commonly on the beard area in men and the lower legs in women.
- **Occlusion** – Skin or hair products that are greasy can clog the follicle and cause inflammation.
- **Medications** – Coal tar products and topical steroids are known to cause folliculitis.
- **Infection** – Bacterial infection with *Staphylococcus aureus* is the most common infectious cause of folliculitis. Yeast infection is most commonly caused by *Pityosporum ovale*.
- **Immunosuppression** – Eosinophilic folliculitis is a distinct form that occurs in individuals with compromised immune systems (e.g. HIV patients).

**How is folliculitis treated?** Treatment of folliculitis depends on the underlying cause. In general, the following measures are helpful:

- Avoid greasy hair or skin products.
  - Do not use tar based products or steroids without supervision by your doctor.
  - Yeast infection can be treated with topical or oral antifungal medications.
  - Bacterial infection by *Staph* is more difficult to treat since the organism is often carried in your nose, armpits, belly button, and/or around your anus. To keep the infection under control, or to get rid of it entirely, these areas need to be treated as well as the areas with the lesions.
1. You will be prescribed an oral antibiotic that you should take on a daily basis as directed by your doctor.
  2. Shower daily. Use one teaspoon of PhisoHex or Hibiclens cleanser on a clean, wet washcloth and wash your body from head to toe, including the nostrils, armpits, belly button, and anus (these areas should be cleaned last). Avoid contact with the eyes. If you have a problem in your scalp, wash your scalp with the cleanser AFTER you have used shampoo and conditioner. Use the washcloth only once, then launder it before using it again. Do this at least 3 times a week for one month.
  3. Apply a topical antibiotic (Over-the-counter Bacitracin or prescription Bactroban) with a Q-tip inside your nose as far as your pinky finger would reach. Use a fresh Q-tip each time so you do not contaminate the entire tube of medication. Do this daily for one month.

4. If you have the infection in an area that is being shaved, use only a disposable razor, and throw it away after one use.

**For more information on folliculitis go to:**  
[www.dermnetnz.org/acne/folliculitis.html](http://www.dermnetnz.org/acne/folliculitis.html)