

Urethritis from Soap - in Young Boys

Definition

- Urethritis is when the urethra becomes irritated or infected.
- The urethra is the tube that connects the bladder to the end of the penis. It carries the urine out of the bladder.
- This soap problem only occurs in young boys, long before puberty.
- This diagnosis is only made after medical exam by a doctor.

Health Information

Symptoms

- The main symptom of urethritis is burning or discomfort when passing urine.
- In boys who are not circumcised, the foreskin also may be irritated and itchy.
- If the urethritis spreads to infect the bladder, symptoms will get worse. Your child will have more pain when passing urine. The urine can become cloudy with a bad odor. He may urinate more frequently. This rarely happens in boys.
- If the foreskin becomes infected, it will become red and swollen. It may drain pus.

Cause

- Urethritis in young boys is often from soap irritating the urethra opening. The usual irritants are bubble bath, shampoo, or soapy bath water.
- Before puberty, the lining of the opening of the penis is thin and sensitive.

Diagnosis

- Any child with painful urination needs a urine sample checked. This is to rule out a bladder infection.
- Soap urethritis is diagnosed by having symptoms of pain when passing urine plus a normal urine test.

Prevention

- Clean the penis with warm water only. Soap is not needed before puberty.
- Do not use bubble bath. It can be very irritating to the tip of the penis. Avoid getting too much soap or shampoo in the bath water.
- Shampoo your child's hair at the end of the bath.
- Keep the bath time less than 10 minutes. End the bath sooner if the water is soapy.
- Have your child try to urinate right after baths.

What to Expect

- The discomfort goes away after 1 to 2 days of proper treatment.

Care Advice

1. Key Points

- Urethritis will get better with home treatment.
- Cleaning the genital area properly is key.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Cleanse the Genital Area with Warm Water**

- Have your son soak his bottom and penis in a basin or bathtub of warm water for 10 minutes. Repeat this twice a day for 2 days.
- This will remove any irritants from the genital area and promote healing.
- If your son is not circumcised, pull back the foreskin as far as it will easily go. Then also rinse off that area. Remember to put the foreskin back in place after drying.
- After the symptoms go away, cleanse the genital area once a day with warm water.
- Never clean under the foreskin or the end of the penis with soap.

3. **Hydrocortisone Cream**

- Apply a tiny amount of 1% hydrocortisone cream to the end of the penis. No prescription is needed. Dry the area first.
- Do this twice a day for 2 days, then stop using it.

4. **Pain Medicine**

- Give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) to reduce the painful urination. Repeat as needed. (see Dosage chart)

5. **Drink Enough Fluids**

- Encourage him to drink enough fluids to keep the urine light-colored.
- Reason: concentrated urine can be more painful when passed.

Call Your Doctor If

- Urine sample hasn't been checked for infection
- Pain and itching is not gone after 48 hours of treatment
- Passing urine becomes more painful
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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