

Required Knowledge for Pediatric Physicians: Smegma, Ballooning, Yeast, and Redness

The following are normal aspects of penile development in intact (not circumcised) males and are not a cause for concern:

Smegma/Smegma Pearls

Smegma, a white amalgam of sloughed skin cells and moisture, is present underneath the foreskin of males and between the labia of females. At birth, the foreskin is fused to the glans (head) of the penis by a delicate epithelial membrane that dissolves naturally over time. Before the ongoing process of foreskin separation is complete, the smegma that forms may remain under the foreskin for some time and can form small lumps known as smegma pearls. These lumps are not cause for alarm and should not be removed manually, as they will eventually work their way out.

Ballooning

Ballooning is a normal and harmless occurrence that intact boys may experience. As the shared epithelial membrane that connects the prepuce to the glans begins to dissolve, pockets can form where the foreskin has separated. Urine can momentarily swirl around in these spots and briefly fill them up before exiting. This is often referred to as “ballooning” because it appears as just that: a balloon being blown up, then deflated.

The following are minor issues that can be easily treated and are not a cause for aggressive medical intervention:

Yeast

When a boy has an overgrowth of yeast, both the glans and the foreskin can appear swollen beyond their usual size, shiny, and more red/pink than usual. White patches or a red rash on the skin may also be present, as well as a cheesy, foul-smelling discharge. Just as with females, yeast infections can cause itching, discomfort, and pain for males. Yeast is easily treated in most cases with antifungals, diet changes, and breathable clothing.

Red/Irritated Foreskin Tip

Redness on the tip of the foreskin is a common occurrence on intact boys and is not cause for alarm. In its normal state, the foreskin tip frequently appears flushed or darker in color than the rest of the skin covering the penis. Typically, any increased redness will clear up on its own within a few days. Warm baths may help. Calmoseptine can also be used if redness persists.

Images and More information:

YourWholeBaby.org/smegma
YourWholeBaby.org/ballooning
YourWholeBaby.org/yeast

