pediatric associates
of austin, p.a.

Balanitis

What is balanitis?
Balanitis is inflammation (redness, swelling, or irritation) of the head of the penis. In uncircumcised boys, the foreskin may also be affected. This is called balanoposthitis. Symptoms may include:

- Redness or swelling of the head of the penis or foreskin
- Tenderness, itching, or discomfort
- Pain or burning with urination
- Discharge or an unpleasant odor

What causes balanitis?
Balanitis can result from irritation, inflammation, or infection. Common causes include:

- Irritation from soaps, bubble baths, wipes, or scented products
- Moisture, friction, or urine trapped under the foreskin
- Bacterial or yeast infections, which may require prescription treatment

How can I care for it at home?
For mild redness or irritation:

- Gently soak in or rinse with warm water and pat dry. Avoid scrubbing.
- Avoid bubble baths, scented soaps, and fragranced wipes.
- Do not apply medicated creams unless directed by your healthcare provider.

Important foreskin care: Never force the foreskin back. It is normal for young boys to have a foreskin that does not fully retract. If it retracts easily on its own, gently rinse underneath with warm water and return it to its normal position covering the head of the penis. Never leave it pulled back.

When should I seek medical care?
Contact our office if:

- Redness, swelling, or irritation worsens or does not improve within 1–2 days.
- You notice pus, unusual discharge, sores, or a persistent unpleasant odor.
- Symptoms keep returning, or the foreskin becomes increasingly tight or painful to move.
- Your older child reports pain or burning with urination.

Seek urgent medical care if:

- Your child cannot urinate or can pass only a few drops.
- Foreskin is stuck behind the head of the penis and cannot be returned to its normal position.
- There is severe pain, rapid swelling, or the head of the penis becomes dark blue or purple.
- Your child has a fever with significant redness or swelling or appears very ill.

Looking for more trusted health information? Explore our comprehensive library of provider-written guides on the PAA's Patient Handouts page. You will find practical, expert advice on related topics—including Infant Genital Care, and more.

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