

## Reddish lesions on penis <sup>[1]</sup>

Dear Alice:

I just noticed I have weird reddish lesions/skin shedding just below the head of my penis. Also, I found a small (3-4mm) circular lesion a little lower on the shaft. I have had a sexual relationship for the past couple of months. Could you please explain to me what kind of STD I might have and post your answer as soon as you can.

Sincerely,  
Sleeplessly worried

### Answer

Dear Sleeplessly Worried,

There are a number of conditions, viruses, and bacteria that could cause small lesions and skin shedding, so it's not possible to give a diagnosis over the screen. Visiting a health care provider can provide you with a specific diagnosis as they can see the specific lesions and learn more about your medical history. That said, here are some common conditions that might result in an itchy, red, and bumpy shaft:

- **Genital herpes**, a common sexually transmitted infection (STI), can appear as sores or lesions on the genitals. Classic genital herpes lesions resemble small pimples or blisters that eventually crust over and finally scab like a small cut. These lesions often appear within the first two weeks the virus is transmitted (although they can take longer to appear) and can take between two to four weeks to heal.
- Your symptoms could indicate a **ringworm** infection, which is a fungal infection. Ringworm causes either a red, circular skin rash inflamed around the edges but healthy-looking in the middle, or a round, flat patch of itchy skin.
- **Molluscum contagiosum virus** (MCV) is another possible cause of the lesions. MCV is a generally benign skin infection that causes small lesions or bumps.
- **Genital warts**, caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV), could also be the cause of the bumps.
- **Scabies**, which can present as lesions or pimple-like irritations that itch persistently and usually become worse at night, is another possibility.
- Finally, primary phase **syphilis** can cause lesions on the genitals, but can be cured if treated promptly with antibiotics.

All the conditions above can be transmitted through sexual contact, so until you figure out

what you have, you may want to be extra careful about protecting your partner from direct contact with the lesions or from genital-to-genital contact.

Again, there are many STIs as well as other skin conditions that can cause red lesions. While bumps that appear on the genitals can certainly be distressing, many of these conditions are curable and treatable. Scheduling an appointment with your health care provider can help you figure out what is causing your symptoms and provide any potential treatment.

Take care,

Alice!

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