

KERATOSIS PILARIS

This disorder causes the formation of small rough spiny elevations of the skin similar to gooseflesh over large areas such as the upper arms and thighs. It is most prominent in cold weather and less prominent in warm summer weather. It also varies with the humidity.

Keratosis pilaris often begins around age two and persists for years extending into adulthood, but many people do outgrow the disease. Other conditions that give a somewhat similar appearance are vitamin A deficiency, an extremely rare problem, and eruptions due to iodine, kelp, irritating clothing, etc. Although it may be familial, keratosis pilaris is not “catching” or contagious.

Treatment does not cure the problem but it does help it. Different forms of lubrication such as mild glycolic acid lotions or creams, mild corticosteroids, and mild tar preparations can be helpful, particularly when there is itching. Another lotion available without a prescription is Lacticare and one that does require a prescription is LacHydrin Lotion. When the skin is wet following a bath or shower, it is helpful to apply bath oil or other lubricants. An irritant that helps at times is Retin A, a prescription cream, gel or lotion. Frequency of use with this product must be spaced so as not to produce significant distress, but just enough benefit. Constant irritation prolongs and aggravates the problem.