

## **Keratosis pilaris**

### **What is keratosis pilaris?**

Keratosis pilaris is a common but harmless condition that results in rough, bumpy spots on the upper arms and thighs. It is most common in adolescence but can also occur in children and adults. It occurs to some degree in approximately 50 to 80% of adolescents.

### **What causes keratosis pilaris?**

Keratosis pilaris is, in most cases, a genetic condition that runs in families. The skin cells that line the hair follicles are sticky and form a plug of dry skin. Many bumps also contain an ingrown hair.

Keratosis pilaris is more common in people with a tendency towards eczema (atopic dermatitis).

### **What does keratosis pilaris look like?**

Keratosis pilaris varies in severity from a few small bumps to widespread involvement. It most commonly affects the upper arms and thighs although it can also be seen on the face and back. In some cases, the bumps can be quite red (keratosis pilaris rubra).

The appearance of keratosis pilaris is often more obvious in winter due to lower humidity levels and consequent drying of the skin.

### **How is keratosis pilaris diagnosed?**

Keratosis pilaris is diagnosed during a clinical examination by a dermatologist who observes the typical appearance of the rash. Further investigations are not usually needed.

### **How is keratosis pilaris treated?**

There is no cure for keratosis pilaris. However, it often improves over time.

Keratosis pilaris is harmless so no specific treatment is needed. However, people affected with this condition often want to improve the appearance of the skin. Treatment is directed towards increasing the moisture of the skin and removing the bumps. Moisturisers and regular but gentle exfoliation are the most commonly used forms of treatment. Creams containing urea, salicylic acid, lactic acid or glycolic acid may also be used.

Other reported treatments include topical retinoids (vitamin A) and vitamin D creams. Vascular laser or IPL might be considered in keratosis pilaris rubra although the response to these treatments is variable.