



Government of **Western Australia**
South Metropolitan Health Service
Fiona Stanley Fremantle Hospitals Group

Dermatology pre-referral guidelines – Keratosis Pilaris

Fiona Stanley Hospital Dermatology

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Disclaimer

These guidelines have been produced to guide clinical decision making for general practitioners (GPs). They are not strict protocols. Clinical common-sense should be applied at all times. These clinical guidelines should never be relied on as a substitute for proper assessment with respect to the particular circumstances of each case and the needs of each patient. Clinicians should also consider the local skill level available and their local area policies before following any guideline.

Introduction

Keratosis pilaris is a common but harmless condition which results in papules on the upper arms, lateral thighs and the lateral cheeks, though in some cases it can be more widespread. It can cause red spots to be seen in the affected areas.

It affects 50% to 80% of adolescents but can also occur in children and adults. It can often look more prominent in winter due to increased dryness of the skin and changes in humidity and in younger children when they are unwell.

Keratosis pilaris is asymptomatic in most cases, but some people pick at their skin and other's don't like the way it looks. If it co-exists with atopic dermatitis it can be mistaken for eczema causing confusion as keratosis pilaris does not respond to topical steroids.

Pre-referral management

Recommended treatment of keratosis pilaris, for people wanting to improve the appearance of their skin, is directed towards increasing the moisture of the skin and mild exfoliation to release the dead skin that causes the papule. This can be achieved by:

- Regular moisturising and use of soap free washes.
- Gentle regular exfoliation (e.g. with a face cloth or a loofah).
- Use of creams containing urea, salicylic acid, lactic acid or glycolic acid.

When to refer

This condition is of cosmetic concern only and as such is not appropriate to be referred to a tertiary public hospital.

Useful resources

- [Keratosis pilaris](#) - Dermnet
- [Keratosis pilaris](#) - The Australasian College of Dermatologists
- [Keratosis pilaris](#) - Health Direct

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