

COSMOPOLITAN

EXPERTS

sex advice

from Amy Levine, Cosmo's Carnal Counselor

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"My guy has bumps on his penis"

Q My boyfriend has little bumps on his penis. They aren't discolored or pus-filled, and they don't hurt him if I touch them. Is this normal, or should I be concerned?

A Keep in mind that penile skin is often bumpy and lumpy, so it's possible that you're simply describing your man's lower landscape. The bumps on his penis could also be sebaceous cysts of hair follicles or an allergic reaction, both of which are harmless and noncontagious. Or, the raised surfaces could be pearly penile papules, which often appear as one or two rings of small "pearly" or domelike bumps that form around the glans (the head) of the penis and are also nothing to worry about.

However, it's quite possible that the bumps are indicative of a more serious STD, such as HPV (human papillomavirus), which can cause genital warts that are either raised or flat, white or flesh-colored, and usually don't itch or burn. Less common is MCV (molluscum contagiosum virus), which is related to the pox family of viruses and appears as clustered, whitish bumps with a central indentation. Both conditions often require removal by a topical treatment or surgical procedure. Herpes may also show up as bumps, bitelike pimples or a crusty rash with no physical discomfort, though it more often manifests as sores or blisters that do itch and burn.

All three of the above STDs are viruses, so they can be spread through skin-to-skin contact with the infected area -- even when symptoms aren't present. And, since it's impossible to determine what the bumps are without a medical diagnosis, encourage your guy to get checked out by a doctor while the bumps are still visible, i.e., ASAP. Until then, your best bet is to play it safe and avoid contact with your guy's genitals (even with a condom) until he gets a clean bill of health.