

Razor bumps look and feel like pimples, but they are actually the result of ingrown hairs. The medical term for this condition is Pseudo-folliculitis barbae (PFB).

What causes razor bumps?

Hair grows inside tubes in the skin called "follicles." When shaved, the tip of the hair is left with a sharp point. As curly hair grows, this sharp tip may curve back and pierce the skin. The medical term for this cause of PFB is "extrafollicular penetration" (see diagram).

Razor bumps can also form when shaving too close to the skin causes the whiskers to be clipped off below the skin surface. This allows the hair to penetrate the side of the follicle instead of following its normal path to the skin surface. This can occur more often with curly hair. The medical term for this cause of PFB is "transfollicular penetration" (see diagram).

The body treats all ingrown hairs just as it would splinter or any other foreign object by producing an inflammatory pimple-like bump. Often, if the condition occurs over an extended period of time, the skin will respond by producing unsightly dark spots at the sites of the PFB bumps. Unfortunately, these dark spots can take many months to fade. Since most African-American men have curly, coarse hair and curved follicles, they frequently suffer from razor bumps. This is also true for people of Mediterranean descent.

It should be noted that razor bumps can affect anyone who has curly hair or, who has hair follicles oriented at oblique angles to the skin surface which makes it easier for the Sharp hair tips to re-enter the skin.

The key to controlling PFB to minimize hair re-entry back into the skin (and subsequent inflammation) by reducing the sharpness of the hair tip and to leave hair at the appropriate length after shaving.



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RAZOR BUMPS TREATMENT



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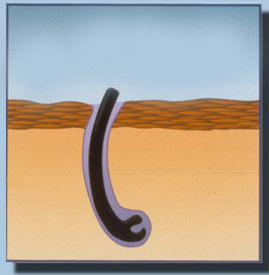
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What to do about razor bumps:

The best therapy is to avoid shaving and let the beard grow. However, this is not always a practical solution. If you do shave, the following step-by-step program is recommended:

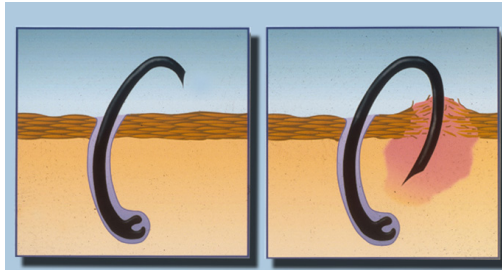
(It should be noted that if your doctor feels that your condition is extreme, you should let your beard grow out for several weeks before proceeding. As the hair lengthens, the shafts will act like miniature "springs" and eventually "pop free." Your doctor may even prescribe a short course of antibiotic pills. Your doctor will tell you when to begin the anti-PFB shaving program).

STEP #1 Wet your beard with warm water to soften the hair. The best way to accomplish this is to take a shower before shaving. Make sure that your beard hair is in contact with the water for at least two minutes. This will fully hydrate your hair. Hydrated haircuts more easily and leaves a hair tip that is not as sharp. This will decrease the chance for re-entering the skin. (See "ideal condition").



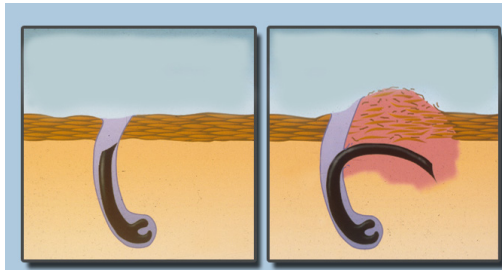
Ideal Condition

STEP #2 Use a soft bristled toothbrush, in a circular motion on the beard area to dislodge any hair tips that are beginning to pierce the skin. This should be done twice per day before shaving and at bedtime. If approved by your doctor, you may even use a sterile needle cleaned with rubbing alcohol are pointed to pick, to dislodge any particularly stubborn tips failure to dislodge any tips attempting to re-enter the skin will cause "extrafollicular" razor bumps. (See diagram).



Extra-Follicular Penetration

STEP #3 Use an adjustable electric razor for shaving. Make sure to get one that has adjustable blade settings. Shave at the setting that leaves hair the longest to prevent "transfollicular" razor bumps. (See diagram).



Trans-Follicular Penetration

STEP #4 Use Vaniqa™ lotion twice daily. Vaniqa is a product that requires a prescription from your doctor. Vaniqa will make the hair grow very slowly, so less grooming is required which means less overall irritation.

STEP #5 After shaving, apply Dr. Crutchfield's Skin Conditioning Lotion followed directly with 'CutiCort Cream Number Five' on top of the skin conditioning lotion. These two lotions will minimize inflammation and irritation. These are both available at our office.

STEP #6 Always use a "collar extender" whenever wearing neckties to prevent excess friction and pressure from worsening the PFB condition on the neck and collar area. These can easily be found on Amazon.com.

STEP #7 For cleansing purposes, you should always use a mild soap such as Vanicream cleansing bar, Dove unscented, Olay, Purpose, Basis or Cetaphil.

STEP #8 If dark spots are a problem, apply Dr. Crutchfield's Brightening Cream or Lytera Lotion, twice daily. Dr. Crutchfield will recommend the one that is best for you.

STEP #9 Additionally, if one is using a lightening cream, a good sunscreen must be applied twice daily, once in the morning and one other time. Using a lightening cream without sunscreen is like walking up an escalator that is moving down – tough to make any progress.

It may take a few days to several weeks for your condition to improve. Sometimes it can even take a couple of months to see improvement. Stay with the program and don't give up.

The goal is to not necessarily have "perfect" skin but to significantly improve the current condition of your skin. "Don't let perfection be the enemy of Very Good." Many patients do not experience extremely satisfying results when using this system.

In extreme, refractory cases, laser hair removal may be considered, but talk carefully with Dr. Crutchfield before doing this. Using the wrong hair laser can cause significant damage.

It is also important to note that whenever you have inflammation of the skin, your skin can react by producing dark spots. If the inflammation is removed, the dark spots will fade away with time. This may take several weeks or even months. The best way to treat dark spots to prevent them from coming in the first place.

Hopefully, that's what this skin program will do for you!