

“What are these pesky papules?”

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A healthy, 20-year-old female has recently noticed small, yellowish papules on her lips. After noticing similar lesions on her partner, she is concerned about having contracted a contagious disease. She does not complain of any itchiness or pain.

What is your diagnosis?

These are Fordyce's spots, also known as Fordyce's granules (Figure 1). Fordyce's spots are sebaceous glands that are not associated with hair follicles. They present as small, asymptomatic, yellowish papules on the vermilion border of the upper lip and on the buccal mucosa (particularly on the inner aspects of the commissures). The spots are usually multiple and bilateral and rarely exceed 1 mm to 2 mm in size.




Figure 1. Fordyce's spots.

This condition is very common, affecting approximately 80% of the population. Fordyce's spots are seldom noticeable before puberty, as hormonal changes during puberty stimulate their development.

Fordyce's spots tend to be more obvious in males, patients with greasy skin and the elderly.

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Free sebaceous glands are also frequently seen on the genital mucosa and the areola.

How would you treat this condition?

Fordyce's spots are completely benign and are considered a normal variation. Other than providing reassurance, no other treatment is necessary.

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