



Arm Discolouration

Benjamin Barankin, MD, FRCPC

A 23-year-old Sri Lankan female presents with a roughness and discolouration on her lateral arms that she has had for several years. No moisturizer seems to help.

1. What is the most likely diagnosis?

- Xerosis
- Atopic dermatitis
- Keratosis pilaris
- Irritant contact dermatitis
- Folliculitis

2. This condition has been associated with which of the following?

- Xerosis
- Ichthyosis vulgaris
- Atopic dermatitis
- Eczema
- All of the above

3. How might you manage this condition?

- Advise against scrubbing the affected area
- Advise switching from a soap to a cleanser
- Mild topical steroid
- Lactic acid-containing lotion
- All of the above

Keratosis pilaris (KP) is a common and benign skin condition with a genetic basis resulting in altered follicular keratinization. It typically presents as rough papules on the outer, upper arms, but can also affect the buttocks, thighs and cheeks. Although the exact cause is uncertain, it is often found in association with dry skin conditions and atopy. Approximately



Figure 1: Roughness and discoloration on the lateral arm.

half of the population is affected to some degree, with onset usually in puberty, and improvement noted with age. There is a positive family history in up to 50% of patients, and improvement is often noted in the summer months.

Management involves avoiding overdrying the skin, thus cleansers and moisturizers are important. Over-the-counter glycolic acid or salicylic acid creams and lotions can be helpful, as can prescription mild topical steroids and topical retinoids. [Dx](#)

Answers: 1-c; 2-e; 3-e

Dr. Barankin is a Dermatologist in Toronto, Ontario.