

Patient Information Leaflet: Seborrhoeic Keratoses

What are Seborrhoeic Keratoses?

Seborrhoeic keratoses are common non-cancerous skin growths that appear as raised, wart-like lesions. They can vary in colour from light tan to black and often have a scaly or rough texture. These growths are typically found on the face, chest, back, and scalp, and are more prevalent in older adults. While they are generally harmless, their appearance can be concerning for many people.

Causes:

The exact cause of seborrhoeic keratoses is not fully understood, but they tend to occur more frequently with age and are thought to be related to past sun exposure when growing up, past sun burn and genetic factors. Contributing factors include:

- **Sun exposure:** While they can appear anywhere on the body, they are frequently found on sun-exposed areas.
- **Genetic predisposition:** Family history may increase the likelihood of developing these growths.
- **Hormonal changes:** In some cases, hormonal changes may play a role in their development.

Symptoms:

Seborrhoeic keratoses are usually asymptomatic, meaning they do not cause pain or discomfort. Common characteristics include:

- Raised, rough, warty lesions that feel like a bump on the skin.
- Varying colours, whilst typically brown they can pink initially or grey/black.
- A "stuck-on" appearance, where the growth seems to adhere to the skin's surface.
- Size can vary from a few millimetres to several centimetres in diameter.

Diagnosis:

Seborrhoeic keratoses are typically diagnosed through a physical examination by a healthcare provider or dermatologist. They can usually be identified based on their appearance. If there is any uncertainty about the diagnosis or concerns regarding skin cancer, a biopsy may be performed to confirm the presence of seborrhoeic keratoses and rule out other skin conditions.

Management and Treatment:

Seborrhoeic keratoses generally do not require treatment unless they are bothersome or for cosmetic reasons. Treatment options include:

1. **Observation:** If the growths are not causing issues, no action may be necessary, and they can be monitored over time.
2. **Cryotherapy:** Freezing the lesion with liquid nitrogen is a common method used to remove seborrhoeic keratoses. This treatment is quick and often effective.
3. **Shave Excision:** In some cases, the growth can be shaved off at skin level using a local anaesthetic.
4. **Laser Therapy:** Certain laser treatments can be used to vaporize seborrhoeic keratoses, reducing their appearance.



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Self-Care and Monitoring:

- **Skin Checks:** Regularly monitor your skin for any new growths or changes in existing lesions.
- **Avoid Picking:** Do not pick at or scratch seborrheic keratoses, as this can lead to irritation or infection.
- **Sunscreen:** Protecting your skin from sun exposure can help prevent the development of new lesions.

When to Seek Medical Advice:

- If you notice changes in the size, shape, or colour of existing seborrheic keratoses.
- If a lesion becomes painful, itchy, or starts to bleed.
- If you have concerns about other skin lesions that may resemble seborrheic keratoses.

Conclusion:

Seborrheic keratoses are common, benign skin growths that typically require no treatment unless they become bothersome. Understanding your skin and monitoring any changes can help you manage your skin health effectively. For any questions or concerns regarding seborrheic keratoses or other skin conditions, please consult your healthcare provider or dermatologist for further evaluation and guidance.

