

Patient Information Leaflet: Dermatofibromas

What are Dermatofibromas?

Dermatofibromas are benign (non-cancerous) skin growths that commonly appear on the legs, arms, and trunk. They are usually small, firm, raised nodules that can vary in colour from brown to tan or reddish. Dermatofibromas are composed of fibrous tissue and arise from cells in the dermis (the deeper layer of skin). While they are typically harmless, they can sometimes be mistaken for other skin conditions, including skin cancers.

Causes:

The exact cause of dermatofibromas is not fully understood. They are thought to arise from a localised proliferation of fibroblasts (a type of skin cell that produces connective tissue) in response to an injury or trauma, such as:

- Insect bites
- Minor cuts or scrapes
- Other skin injuries

Dermatofibromas can develop at any age and are more common in adults, particularly women.

Symptoms:

Dermatofibromas typically present with the following characteristics:

- Small, raised, firm nodules, usually less than 1 cm in diameter.
- A brownish or tan colour.
- Generally, they are painless but may be itchy or tender in some cases.
- Feel like a firm “pea” in the skin that you can pinch causing puckering of the skin surface.

Diagnosis:

Dermatofibromas are often diagnosed through a physical examination by a dermatologist. They may assess the appearance of the nodule and its characteristics. If there is any doubt about the diagnosis or concern regarding skin cancer, a skin biopsy may be performed to examine the tissue under a microscope.

Management and Treatment:

In most cases, dermatofibromas do not require treatment unless they are painful, irritating, or cosmetically undesirable. Treatment options include:

1. **Observation:** If the dermatofibroma is not causing any symptoms, no treatment is needed, and it can be monitored over time.
2. **Surgical Excision:** If removal is desired, the dermatofibroma can be surgically excised under local anaesthesia. This procedure typically provides a permanent solution, and the growth is usually removed completely. However, this will leave a surgical scar that is longer than the lesion removed.

Self-Care and Monitoring:

- **Monitor Changes:** Regularly check your skin for any changes in the dermatofibromas or the appearance of new growths.
- **Sun Protection:** Use sunscreen to protect exposed skin, especially on areas where dermatofibromas are located, to prevent pigmentation changes.



Experts in Skin & Hair

When to Seek Medical Advice:

- If you notice changes in the size, shape, or colour of a dermatofibroma.
- If a dermatofibroma becomes painful, bleeding, or shows signs of infection (such as redness or pus).
- If you have concerns about other skin lesions that may resemble dermatofibromas.

Conclusion:

Dermatofibromas are benign skin growths that generally do not pose any health risks. Understanding their characteristics and recognising when treatment might be appropriate can help you manage your skin health effectively. If you have questions or concerns about dermatofibromas or skin changes, please consult your healthcare provider or dermatologist for further evaluation and advice.

