



Seborrheic Keratoses

What Are Seborrheic Keratoses?

Seborrheic keratoses are harmless round growths on the surface of your skin. They first start to appear in middle age, and their numbers tend to increase as you get older.

When they first appear, seborrheic keratoses look like dabs of candle wax stuck to your skin. The growths are slightly raised, have smooth borders, and are light brown in color. Over time, seborrheic keratosis grow, become thicker, and develop a thick warty surface. They also change color: Seborrheic keratoses may turn dark brown, black, orange, yellow, green, or white (for example, some people develop seborrheic keratoses on their ankles that look like “white barnacles”). Sometimes small white or black circles form within the growths. These are known as horn cysts.

Seborrheic keratoses can appear anywhere on your body, but they are most common on the face, sideburn area, hairline, chest, back, and shoulders. Sometimes they appear singly; sometimes they form in clusters.

Seborrheic keratoses are **not a sign of skin cancer**, and only rarely do they become cancerous. Their cause is unknown. Unlike some other skin growths, they do not appear to be related to sun exposure.

Seborrheic keratoses are often confused with warts, but they are quite different. Warts are caused by a virus; seborrheic keratosis are not. And although warts may disappear without treatment, seborrheic keratoses do not

Seborrheic keratoses usually don't cause any symptoms; however, if one of these growths rubs against your clothing or gets in the way of your comb, brush, or razor, it may become irritated or bleed.

How Are Seborrheic Keratoses Treated?

Seborrheic keratoses usually don't need to be treated. You may wish to consider having seborrheic keratoses removed if you are uncomfortable with the way they make you look or if they are a nuisance (for example, if they become irritated from rubbing against your clothing or get in the way of your razor).

Seborrheic keratoses can be removed in the following ways (the method chosen depends on the size and location of the growth).

- Cryotherapy. Your doctor will freeze the growths with liquid nitrogen.
- Curettage and electrodesiccation. Your doctor will scrape the growths from your skin with an instrument called a curette. An electric needle is then applied to the treated areas. The heat from the needle seals the blood vessels to stop any bleeding.

These are all simple procedures that cause minimal scarring in most people. Once removed, a seborrheic keratosis usually does not come back, but you are likely to develop more of them as you get older.