

Department of Dermatology

Seborrhoeic warts

Information for patients



You have been given a diagnosis of seborrhoeic warts. This leaflet has been written to give you further information about your diagnosis and treatment options.

What are seborrhoeic warts?

These are harmless growths on the skin. They have a number of different names, including seborrhoeic keratoses and basal cell papillomas. They have a rough surface and can vary in colour from skin coloured to almost black. They most often occur on the stomach, chest and back and usually start to appear after the age of 40.

What causes seborrhoeic warts?

They are caused by an excess of ordinary skin cells. They can run in families but are not infectious. They usually do not cause trouble, but occasionally they can become inflamed, especially if knocked or caught in something like a zip. If they do not settle after a few weeks, contact your doctor.

Once they have developed, seborrhoeic warts usually remain for life and new ones may appear over the years. They can vary in number, from one or two to hundreds. They are much more common than skin cancers and are usually easy to recognise. However, it is important to get any new, unusually coloured lump checked over by a doctor, so that the correct diagnosis can be made.

Treatment options

Seborrhoeic warts do not require treatment, as they are usually harmless, but you may want them to be removed for cosmetic reasons. This is best done by scraping the wart away under local anaesthetic (where the skin is made numb) or by freezing it with liquid nitrogen.

Follow-up

You do not necessarily need to be seen for follow-up. However, it is advisable to get to know your skin, so you can recognise any changes and report them to your doctor if you are at all concerned.

Your doctor or nurse can give you advice about sun safety, or you can get further information from Cancer Research UK.

Tel: **0300 123 1022**

Website: **www.cancerresearchuk.org**

Further information

British Association of Dermatologists

Tel: **0207 383 0266**

Website: **www.bad.org.uk**

Who to contact

If you have any questions about your diagnosis or management your GP will be able to help.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

Authors: Dr Richard Turner and Dr Matthew Lin
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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

