

Seborrheic Keratosis

What is seborrheic keratosis?

A seborrheic keratosis is a very common benign (noncancerous) skin growth. You are more likely to have this kind of skin growth as you get older.

What is the cause?

No one knows why seborrheic keratosis happens. It tends to run in families.

What are the symptoms?

These growths usually start as tiny raised, tan or brown spots that grow larger and thicker over months and years. Sometimes they are so dark that they look almost black. They often occur in groups. Sometimes they look like they have been stuck onto the skin. They may be scaly or waxy. They may be found anywhere, especially on the trunk and the legs and arms, but they usually do not happen on the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will look at the spot on your skin. If your provider isn't sure about what kind of growth it is, your skin may be biopsied. This means that a small piece of the growth is cut out or the whole growth is removed. Your skin may be numbed with an anesthetic before the growth is removed. The sample is then sent to the lab for tests to see what kind of growth it is.

How is it treated?

Seborrheic keratosis usually does not need treatment. However, the growth can be removed by freezing it with liquid nitrogen or burning it with cautery or a laser. You may want to remove the growth if:

- You don't like the way it looks.
- The skin growth is a problem because it catches on clothing and bleeds.
- It is irritating in some other way.

How can I take care of myself?

It's a good idea to contact your healthcare provider about any change in your skin that concerns you. Many skin changes or growths are not cancerous, but some can become cancer. All cancers are easier to treat early rather than late, so see your provider to have any suspicious skin changes examined as soon as possible.

How long will seborrheic keratosis last?

If you don't treat the growths, they will not go away.

How can I help prevent seborrheic keratosis?

There is no way you can prevent seborrheic keratosis.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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