

SEBORRHEIC KERATOSES

What causes Seborrheic Keratoses?

Seborrheic Keratoses (singular: Seborrheic Keratosis) are harmless, common skin growths. They occur during adult life, gradually increasing in number. Some persons have a very large number of them. They are not caused by sun exposure.

They should not be confused with Actinic Keratoses (also called Solar Keratoses). Actinic Keratoses are pre-cancerous.

Seborrheic Keratoses are harmless. They begin as slightly raised, light brown spots. Gradually, they thicken and take on a rough, wart-like surface. They slowly darken and may turn black. They typically look as if they were stuck on top of the skin.

What if I develop spots that look different?

Look closely at the spots that you doctor says are Seborrheic Keratoses. If you develop more spots just like these, it is probable that there is no need to be concerned.

However, if you develop spots that look different from the Seborrheic Keratoses you now have, you should see your dermatologist. These could be skin cancers. In particular, occasionally resemble a Seborrheic Keratosis. If any future spot has any of the following features, be sure to have your doctor look at it: the overall shape of the growth is asymmetric, the borders are irregular in outline, or the spot is not the same color throughout.

Treatment

Removal of Seborrheic Keratosis is entirely optional if the doctor is certain of the diagnosis. Some insurance companies may consider the treatment to be “cosmetic” and therefore it may not be covered. However, sometimes they itch, rub against clothes, or are cosmetically unpleasant. In these circumstances, they are often removed. This is very easy to do and does not leave a scar. However, the skin underneath may be lighter in color than the surrounding normal skin in some cases. The color difference may resolve with time. In almost all cases, the appearance after removal is better than before removal.