

BENIGN SKIN DISORDERS

CYST:

A cyst is a harmless, sac-like growth in the deeper layers of the skin. It is filled with a soft, off-white material that may have a pungent odor. Two common types of cysts are epidermal and pilar. Epidermal cysts grow from cells of the epidermis and are the most common. They used to be called "sebaceous cysts". Pilar cysts are usually found on the scalp. They grow out of cells that produce hairs. Cysts can be a nuisance, but they never become cancerous or malignant. The exact cause of the development of cysts is unknown. However, it is likely that individuals who develop many have inherited this tendency. Small cysts do not require treatment unless they bother you or are cosmetically disfiguring. Larger cysts are often removed because of their size and the risk of infection. Occasionally, some cysts may shrink after a series of cortisone injections into the cyst. Cysts can get infected and resemble a boil. When this happens, oral antibiotics and/or a minor procedure may be required treatments to relieve the pressure and discomfort. Later, after the infection is gone, it may be a good idea to have the remaining cysts removed to prevent recurrence of the infection.

DERMATOFIBROMA:

A dermatofibroma is a common growth most often found on the arms and legs of adults. It is not known exactly why this happens, but it is a harmless occurrence which rarely disappears by itself. It is sometimes necessary to treat because of pain, bleeding or irritation. Surgical excision can be performed in the office using a local anesthetic. A scar always results from treatment of dermatofibromas and this should be taken into consideration when deciding whether or not you want to have it removed. Your doctor can give you an idea of what type of scar might result from treatment of your particular dermatofibroma.

KERATOSIS PILARIS:

Keratosis Pilaris (KP) is a common skin disorder that may affect the arms, the thighs and the face. It appears as rough surfaced red bumps that are located at the opening of a hair follicle. This condition usually appears between the ages of 2 and 3 years, but may only become noticeable later. Generally, KP is an inherited skin disorder. KP may be somewhat itchy or may become irritated. Most people with KP experience improvement in the summer and worsening in the winter. Activities like swimming may dry the skin and prevent the condition from improving. KP that occurs on the face usually disappears after the onset of puberty. Other affected areas may persist. Treatment can lead to gradual improvement but not complete resolution. Treatments usually include use of alpha hydroxy acids, moisturizers and/or cortisone creams. Besides prescription medications, use of a good moisturizing cream throughout the day is helpful.

MILIA:

Milia are harmless white bumps that are most often found on the face. They can appear in people of all ages. These bumps are actually small cysts composed of dead skin cells trapped beneath the surface of the skin. In infants, milia disappear on their own. In adults, milia tend to persist. If you wish to have them removed, a simple extraction can be performed in the office. Your physician may also discuss preventative measures and other treatments for milia, such as alpha or beta hydroxy acid preparations and retinoids.

SEBORRHEIC KERATOSES:

Seborrheic keratoses (SKs) are common skin growths that appear during adult life. They represent a thickening of the epidermis and appear as growths of varying sizes. The tendency to develop SKs is hereditary, but almost everyone develops them at some point. These growths are completely harmless, although they may become inflamed or irritated. They may be pale to dark brown or black in color. SKs can be removed in the office. Once they are removed, they rarely come back, although new growths may continue to develop throughout life.

SKIN TAGS:

Skin tags (or acrochordons) are harmless skin growths that appear during adult life. The tendency to develop skin tags is hereditary but almost everyone can develop them at some point. They are commonly seen with pregnancy and in areas of friction. Skin tags are usually small, flesh colored or brown. They usually occur on the folds of the body like the neck, eyelids, underarms, groin or underneath the breasts. Occasionally, they can become inflamed, tender and even fall off by themselves. Skin tags can be removed in the office. Once they are removed, they rarely come back, although new growths may continue to develop throughout life.