



What is acne keloidalis nuchae (AKN)? Acne keloidalis nuchae literally means “scarring acne of the neck.” It is an unusual skin condition that commonly affects adult black males and other darker-skinned individuals with curly hair. The condition may persist for many years.

What causes AKN? The cause of acne keloidalis nuchae is not known. It is thought that when the hairs are cut short, they curl back into the skin while growing out. The result is ingrown hairs, which irritate the skin surrounding the hair follicle and cause inflammation.

What does AKN look like? At first, small red bumps that look like acne appear along the hair line on the nape of the neck (occipital scalp). Pus and inflammation develops around the hair follicles. As time goes on, the bumps become firm, brown scars that sometimes enlarge to become keloids (thickened plaques of scar tissue). Hair follicles are destroyed by the scarring and bald areas can result.

How is AKN treated? Unfortunately, AKN tends to be chronic and often persists despite a variety of treatments. The following therapies can sometimes help:

- Topical or oral antibiotics can be taken to reduce active inflammation.
- Steroids can be applied topically or injected directly into lesions to soften and flatten scars.
- Oral isotretinoin (Accutane) is only used in severe cases.
- Surgically removing the affected skin is done when large plaques of scar tissue have formed and do not respond to injections.

Can I do anything to prevent AKN?

- Avoid clothing that rubs against the back of your neck.
- Do not shave hair close to the skin, it should be left several millimeters long at all times.

For more information about acne keloidalis nuchae, go to:
www.dermnet.org.nz/acne/keloid-acne.html