

Seborrheic Keratoses

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1. Seborrheic keratoses (SKs) are common harmless lesions. They most frequently appear in middle aged persons, but may be found in adults of any age.
2. SKs are generally round and brown in color, and they are commonly mistaken for moles or warts.
3. Although SKs are completely harmless and can never become cancerous, it is sometimes desirable to remove them. Removal might be considered, for example, if a SK on the scalp is constantly being scraped during hair combing. Removal of a SK is usually accomplished by freezing the lesion with liquid nitrogen.
4. Liquid nitrogen is an extremely cold liquid which will destroy unwanted tissue. A blister or an extremely red spot will form around the SK after liquid nitrogen treatment. The SK will scab off in about 2 weeks following the treatment. It is not necessary to apply any medication to the treated area, and it is OK to shower or bathe as usual.
5. The majority of SKs do not cause symptoms and their removal is considered cosmetic and not covered under medical insurance. The cosmetic clinic run by Kaiser Permanente (408-369-7100) will be able to remove them for a modest fee if you desire.