**Definition**

[By Mayo Clinic staff](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/AboutThisSite/AM00057)

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| [Image of seborrheic keratoses on the back](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/medical/IM00480) | [Seborrheic keratoses on the back](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/medical/IM00480) |
| [Close-up image of seborrheic keratoses](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/medical/IM00481) | [Close-up of seborrheic keratoses](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/medical/IM00481) |

Seborrheic keratosis (seb-o-REE-ik ker-uh-TOE-sis) is one of the most common types of noncancerous skin growths in older adults.

A seborrheic keratosis usually appears as a brown, black or pale growth on the face, chest, shoulders or back. The growth has a waxy, scaly, slightly elevated appearance. Occasionally, it appears singly, but multiple growths are more common. Seborrheic keratoses don't become cancerous, but they can look like skin cancer.

# Seborrheic keratoses are normally painless and require no treatment. You may decide, however, t o have them removed if they become irritated by clothing or for cosmetic reasons

# Treatments and drugs

Treatment of seborrheic keratoses usually isn't necessary. However, you may want them removed if they become irritated, if they bleed because your clothing rubs against them, or if you simply don't like how they look or feel.

This type of growth is never deeply rooted, so removal is usually simple and not likely to leave scars. Your doctor can remove seborrheic keratoses using several methods, including:

* **Freezing with liquid nitrogen (cryosurgery).** Cryosurgery can be an effective way to remove seborrheic keratoses. However, it may not work on large, thick growths, and it may lighten the treated skin (hypopigmentation).
* **Scraping the skin's surface with a special instrument (curettage).** Sometimes curettage is used along with cryosurgery to treat thinner or flat growths. It may be used with electrocautery.
* **Burning with an electric current (electrocautery).** Used alone or with curettage, electrocautery can be effective in removing seborrheic keratoses. This procedure can leave scars if it's not done properly, and it may take longer than other removal methods.
* **Vaporizing the growth with a laser (ablation).** Different types of laser treatments are available. Your doctor may apply pigment to the growth to help concentrate the laser light, making it more effective.

Keep in mind that most insurance companies and Medicare won't pay for the removal of seborrheic keratoses if done only for cosmetic reasons. Medical reasons for seborrheic keratosis treatment include intense itching, pain, inflammation, bleeding and infection.

A **skin tag**, also known as an acrochordon, cutaneous papilloma, cutaneous tag, fibroepithelial polyp, fibroma molluscum, fibroma pendulum, papilloma colli, soft fibroma, and Templeton skin tag, is a small tag of skin which may have a peduncle (stalk) - they look like a small piece of soft, hanging skin.   
  
They can appear on any part of the surface of the body (skin), but most typically exist in areas where skin may rub against skin, such as the:

* Eyelids
* Axillae (armpits)
* Under the breasts
* Groin
* Upper chest
* Neck

Skin tags are invariably benign - non cancerous - tumors of the skin which cause no symptoms, unless it is repeatedly rubbed or scratched, as may happen with clothing, jewelry, or when shaving. Very large skin tags may burst under pressure.   
  
Skin tags are composed of a core of fibers and ducts, nerve cells, fat cells, and a covering or epidermis.   
  
Some people are more susceptible to tags, either because of their overweight, partly due to heredity, and often for unknown reasons. People with [diabetes](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/diabetes/) and pregnant women tend to be more prone to skin tags. Dermatologists say that skin tags affect males and females equally.   
  
Some people may have had skin tags and never noticed them - they would have rubbed or fallen off painlessly. In most cases, however, they do not fall off.   
  
According to Medilexicon's [medical dictionary](http://www.medilexicon.com/medicaldictionary.php):

**A skin tag** is  
  
*1. a polypoid outgrowth of both epidermis and dermal fibrovascular tissue  
  
2. embryology a skin-covered projection that may or may not contain cartilage; typically located in a line between the tragus of the ear and the corner of the mouth and associated with external ear anomalies.*

The surface of skin tags may be smooth or irregular in appearance, they are often raised from the surface of the skin on fleshy peduncles (stalks). They are usually flesh-colored or slightly brownish.   
  
Initially they are quite small, flattened like a pinhead bump. Skin tags can range in diameter from 2mm to 1cm; some may even reach 5cm.   
  
As skin tags more commonly occur in skin creases or fold, it is believed they are mainly caused by skin rubbing against skin.

## What causes skin tags?

**Skin tags** are very common and generally occur after midlife. They are said to be caused by bunches of collagen and blood vessels which are trapped inside thicker bits of skin.   
  
They are believed to be the result of skin rubbing against skin. That is why they are generally found in skin creases and folds.   
  
**Risk factors** - a risk factor is something which increases the likelihood of developing a condition or disease. For example, [obesity](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/obesity/how-much-should-i-weigh.php) significantly raises the risk of developing diabetes type 2. Therefore, obesity is a risk factor for diabetes type 2. Skin tags are more common in:

* People who are overweight and obese, probably because they have more skin folds and creases.
* Pregnant women - most likely because of the hormones secreted.
* Individuals with diabetes.
* People with the human papilloma virus (low-risk [HPV](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/246670.php) 6 and 11).
* Illegal steroid use - they interfere with the body and muscles, causing the collagen fibers in the skin to bond, allowing skin tags to be formed.

According to the NIH (National Institutes of Health), USA, approximately 46% of people have skin tags.   
  
A causal genetic component is thought to exist, i.e. susceptibility may be genetic. People with close family members who have skin tags are more likely to develop them themselves.   
  
Skin tags are rarely associated with:

* Birt-Hogg-Dubé syndrome
* Polycystic ovary syndrome

A skin tag is also known as acrochordon, cutaneous papilloma, cutaneous tag, fibroepithelial polyp, fibroma molluscum, fibroma pendulum, papilloma colli, soft fibroma, and Templeton skin tag.

## Further reading

* [What are the treatment options for skin tags?](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/190982.php)
* [Diseases & Conditions](http://www.symptomfind.com/diseases-conditions/)
* [Skin Tags (Acrochordon)](http://www.symptomfind.com/diseases-conditions/skin-tags/)

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# Skin Tags (Acrochordon)

* [Print](http://www.symptomfind.com/diseases-conditions/skin-tags/)
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Have you ever noticed any tiny, wrinkled skin growths around various areas of your body? These skin-colored and shriveled fragments of flesh are called arochordon, but are commonly known as skin tags or skin tabs. Skin tags typically form around the neck, groin, armpits, eyelids and other areas where the skin folds. While skin tags aren't considered life-threatening, many people find them to be a nuisance for cosmetic reasons, or because the skin tag itself may cause irritation and general discomfort.

## ****What is a Skin Tag?****

A skin tag is classified as a benign skin growth, or tumor, meaning it is harmless and noncancerous. These growths affect many people and are characterized as being tiny protrusions on a person's skin, and usually form after midlife, although some people may experience them during their childhood. Physicians commonly diagnose patients with skin tags through their appearance alone, but in some cases, a biopsy may be needed for further diagnosis if there are abnormalities surrounding the skin tag, like a skin tag that is unusual in appearance or size.

## ****What Causes Skin Tags to Form****

Many believe that skin tags form due to constant rubbing or friction between two areas of skin on the body, which is why they tend to appear in areas where the skin folds. Since those who are overweight or are suffering from obesity tend to have more skin folds and increased skin-on-skin contact, they are more likely to suffer from skin tags. Here is a list of those who are likely to have skin tags:

* People who are past midlife (Ages 60 and up)
* People who are overweight or obese
* Pregnant women due to the hormonal changes that occur
* Anyone with family members who also suffer from skin tags

While skin tags may slightly resemble warts, causing people to fear they are contagious, there is no evidence that might suggest a skin tag can be spread from person to person.

## ****Treatments for Skin Tags****

Since skin tags are considered harmless, they can be left untreated. However, some people may wish to remove a skin tag due to cosmetic reasons, especially if it is in a noticeable area like on the cheek or a person's eyelid. Another reason a person might wish to seek treatment for skin tags is if they cause pain or irritation, especially when located in areas that constantly rub against the skin. Skin tags on the neck, for example, may constantly rub on shirt colors, leading to pain and irritation. Skin tags can also get caught on jewelry, seat belts and zippers, which can also lead to further pain and discomfort. Common treatment methods include:

* Surgical removal
* Freezing the skin tag with liquid nitrogen (cryotherapy)
* Electrically burning off the skin tag (cautery)

There are also home treatments that can be performed, but come with a risk of complications like excessive bleeding or infection. Home treatments include:

* Numbing the skin tag with ice and cutting with a knife or scissors
* Tie a piece of dental floss or string around the base of the skin tag for several days, causing the skin tag to fall off
* Tugging or pulling on the skin tag, which may be painful and may cause the affected area to bleed excessively

Often times, a skin tag may fall from the skin on its own without a person even noticing it. To avoid complications, those who wish to have their skin tags removed should visit their physician, dermatologist or skin specialist to have the skin tags professionally removed.

## ****Complications Caused by Skin Tags****

Aside from being caught in clothing, jewelry or any other objects that might come in contact with the skin, skin tags may lead to other complications that would require their removal. However, these complications are typically not considered life-threatening and skin tag removal is at the discretion of the physician or the patient's preference. These complications can include:

* Skin tag bleeding and irritation, resulting in red coloration and more pain in the affected area
* A dark or even black skin tag where the skin tissue dies (necrosis) due to twisting and pinching.

Skin tags may also form in unusual areas, like on the scrotum or on a person's nipple, where the skin does not fold. This can be caused by constant irritation and friction that may be caused by something like undergarments.

## ****Bottom Line****

Skin tags should be considered nothing more than a mild nuisance, and are not life-threatening in almost all cases. However, people may opt for skin tag removal for cosmetic reasons or to alleviate discomfort. Those who experience any complications caused by skin tags should consult their physician for further evaluation.