

Seborrheic Warts (Keratoses)

What are they?

Seborrheic warts are very common in older people. They look like greasy spots, which seem to be 'stuck' onto the skin. The color varies but usually they are darkish brown or black.

They tend to first appear around the age of 50. Some people develop several as they become older. Also, as time goes by, each wart tends to grow slightly and become darker. They can occur anywhere on the body. It is quite common to see one or two on the forehead of elderly people.

Are they serious?

No. They are benign. That means they don't spread, they are not cancerous, and do not cause any serious problems. The main problem is that they can sometimes look unsightly, particularly if they develop on the face.

Can they be treated?

If they do not cause any problems then it is best that they are left alone. However, if required, they can be removed quite easily by one of two methods.

- **By using a curette.** This involves 'freezing' the surrounding skin with local anesthetic. The seborrheic warts are then scraped off with a sharp surgical instrument called a curette.
- **Liquid nitrogen treatment.** Liquid nitrogen is very cold and anything it touches is killed by the cold. Small amounts of liquid nitrogen can be sprayed onto small seborrheic warts. They are killed and drop off a few days later. Normal skin replaces the area left behind. Liquid nitrogen is not suitable for larger warts.