

DERMATOFIBROMAS

What causes a dermatofibroma?

A dermatofibroma is a round, brownish to purple growth commonly found on the legs and arms. Dermatofibromas contain scar tissue and feel like hard lumps in the skin. We do not know why people grow dermatofibromas. Some may be caused by an injury to the skin such as a scratch mark or insect bite. They are harmless and never turn cancerous.

Treatment

Dermatofibromas are best ignored. Sometimes, if the diagnosis is not certain, a piece may be removed for tissue analysis (biopsy). Dermatofibromas can be removed surgically but since they are deep this usually leaves an unsightly scar. When a dermatofibroma becomes bothersome--for instance, gets in the way of leg shaving or is irritated by clothing--it can be flattened by freezing with liquid nitrogen.

Liquid nitrogen freezing destroys only the upper part of the growth. Therefore, the dermatofibroma, after some years, may again become noticeable. Usually any regrowth is slight and can be handled by another freezing. If there is any change in an individual growth such as bleeding or crusting, please return to have it checked.