

Skin Tags

The warm weather is finally here in the Lowcountry and with that we will be trading in our winter garb for shorts, flip flops and swimsuits. You might find that your skin is in need of some renewal. Dry, scaly, rough, spots on heels, elbows and knees – stressed-out, dried-out, undernourished skin on your face – and then there are those ugly skin tags that seem to crop up out of nowhere!

Q: What are skin tags?

A: Skin tags are quite common. In fact, more than half if not all of the general population have skin tags at some time in their lives. Skin tags are benign skin growths that look like a small piece of soft, hanging skin. These bits of flesh-colored tissue project from the surrounding skin from a small, narrow “stalk”.

Q: How are they treated?

A: Because skin tags pose no danger, they actually don't need to be treated unless they become irritated, but many people find them cosmetically displeasing. Skin tags usually don't cause any pain; however, they can become irritated if anything, such as clothing or jewelry, rubs on them. They can easily be removed by procedures such as cryotherapy (freezing), excision, or cautery.

Q: I've heard that removing a skin tag can cause more to grow? Is this just an old wives' tale?

A: There is no evidence that removing a skin tag will cause more tags to grow. However, some people are simply more prone to developing skin tags and may have new growths periodically.

Q: Can I do something to get rid of these unsightly skin tags myself, or do I need to see a skin doctor?

A: I don't recommend that people attempt home remedies. To avoid unnecessary health risks, skin tag removal should be performed by a dermatologist. Other skin disorders can mimic the appearance of a skin tag. These include benign conditions such as moles, warts and seborrheic keratoses, as well as malignant skin cancers, including melanomas. Medical evaluation is always recommended before treatment.

Q: What causes skin tags?

A: The exact cause isn't known, but they may result from skin that rubs against other skin, high levels of growth hormones, or insulin resistance. Many people develop skin tags as a result of normal aging. Skin tags frequently appear in skin folds of the armpits, neck, belly, and groin.

Q: Are skin tags contagious?

A: No. There is not strong evidence to suggest that common skin tags are contagious. While warts are caused by a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV) and are known to be contagious, skin tags are not caused by HPV.

Skin Tags may be bothersome and make you feel self-conscious about shedding those winter clothes. If you're interested in having your skin tags removed there are effective treatments available. Call Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry today at (843) 689-5259 (Hilton Head) or (843) 705-0840 (Bluffton / Okatie) to schedule an appointment.