
Benign skin lesions

Which benign skin lesions do you treat in Oral Surgery?

There are many benign skin lesions and at Addenbrooke's these might be assessed by the Departments of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery or Dermatology. You might receive your treatment and care in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery if the lesion involves some of the mouth and facial structures or if you are receiving other treatment from this Department.

What are naevi?

Naevi are a medical term for skin moles. They are often darker than the surrounding skin (eg brown or brown-black) because they contain more-pigmented (melanin-containing) cells. They are very common and benign (not cancers). Some people want to have them removed for cosmetic reasons. Rarely, some moles can develop into malignant melanomas - especially when they are exposed to high-levels of sunlight/sunburn. For this reason, some people prefer to have them removed. It is a good idea to keep an eye on your moles (and skin in general) looking for the following changes:

- Recent increase in size
- Ulceration
- Bleeding
- Change in colour

If you notice any of these changes, don't panic. Go to see your GP (or dentist, if it is on your face or mouth) who will be able to refer you to a specialist if necessary.

What is a capillary haemangioma?

Some capillary haemangioma are called strawberry birthmarks. They are usually present at birth and some increase or decrease in size as the baby/child develops. They are pink or red-purple in colour because they consist of enlarged blood vessels. They are usually harmless but some people want them to be treated for cosmetic reasons or because they press on other areas. Because they have a high blood supply they can complicate surgery to the area eg if they extend into the mouth.

What are squamous-cell papillomas?

Squamous cell papillomas are benign skin swellings that often appear with some (melanin) pigment. They are like a wart.

What are skin warts?

Skin warts are overgrowths of skin to produce a lump, which might be cauliflower-like. They are very common, especially in school children and can spread to form 'crops' especially on the fingers. On the feet, they are called verrucas and tend to grow inwards.

The wart is caused by a reaction of the skin to a local wart virus infection. Treatment by doctors involves killing the viruses using either extreme cold or gentle acids.

You can treat most skin warts yourself with over-the-counter preparations (do follow the instructions carefully). If the wart doesn't respond to this simple treatment or is on your face (or genitals), you should seek advice and treatment via your GP.

What is seborrhoeic keratosis?

This is also known as senile keratosis because it is usually seen in the more senior patient. They are benign and appear as yellowish or brown raised lumps. More than one of them are often found on the face, arms or torso.

What are fibromas of the skin?

These are benign, raised swellings that are seen in association with chronic trauma

What are keratoacanthoma?

A keratoacanthoma is a rapidly growing lesion of the skin. Although it is usually considered benign, it can mimic the appearance and behaviour of a malignant skin ulcer. Most doctors will want to at least sample it to make sure that it isn't anything more serious.