

Dermatofibroma

A dermatofibroma is a round, brownish to red-purple growth commonly found on the legs. It is also called a histiocytoma. It can occur anywhere, but seems to favor exposed areas. Dermatofibromas feel like hard lumps under the skin. They are iceberg-like in that there is more under the skin than seen on the surface. They often start out red, and sometimes itch. They usually turn brown later. They probably are a reaction to a minor injury, such a bug bite or a splinter.

We do know that they are harmless and never turn cancerous. For this reason, they are best ignored. If the diagnosis is uncertain, a biopsy may be taken for confirmation. Usually, complete surgical removal leaves a scar that is worse than the dermatofibroma.

Treatment of dermatofibromas should be considered when they get in the way of shaving, become irritated by clothing, or there is a concern that the growth is a skin cancer and not a dermatofibroma. In these cases surgical “shaving” of the top, “punching” out the center and maybe freezing with liquid nitrogen can be done. These treatments only destroy the upper part of the growth, and after a few years it may again become noticeable. If this happens, the treatment could be repeated again if desired.

If you have a growth thought to be a dermatofibroma that grows or bleeds, or if you are concerned that it may be a skin cancer the growth should be biopsied.