



Keloids

What are they? Keloids are firm fibrous growths that commonly occur on the chest, but can develop anywhere on the body. They are often itchy.

What is the cause? Keloids are an exaggerated scarring response, and often follow some kind of trauma or injury to the skin (for example, acne, ear piercing, or surgery). Why certain people develop keloids is still a mystery. Skin on some areas of body, such as the chest and back, are more prone to developing keloids. They are more common in certain ethnic groups such as African Americans and Asians.

What treatments are available? The most common treatment for keloids is the use of steroids. This can be done topically or injected directly into the keloid. The risks of steroid injections include pain, atrophy (thinning of the skin) or lightening of the skin. These side effects usually are reversible once injections are stopped, but rarely can be permanent. Often, depending on the size of the keloid, multiple treatments are necessary. Successful therapy results in a softening and flattening of the keloid as well as a decrease in itching or burning symptoms.

Can a keloid be surgically removed? It is not advisable to surgically excise or cut out a keloid scar. Since the keloid forms by definition due to trauma to the skin, surgery often results in further trauma. This can lead to an even larger keloid than before surgery.

Is there a cure? There is currently no cure or preventative treatment for keloids other than avoiding trauma to the skin. This includes avoiding unnecessary surgeries or body piercings.