Sebaceous Cysts

Sebaceous cysts are sometimes called epidermal cysts. They may come from injury to the skin or an infected hair follicle. The cyst usually contains a "pasty" or "cheesy" looking substance which has a bad smell. This is from the substance called keratin which fills sebaceous cysts. Keratin is a protein that creates the sac of cells called sebaceous cysts.

SYMPTOMS

Sebaceous cysts are usually found on the face, neck, or trunk. They also may occur in the vaginal area or other parts of the genitalia of both women and men. Sebaceous cysts are usually painless, slow-growing small bumps or lumps that move freely under the skin. It's important not to try and pop them. This may cause an infection and lead to tenderness and swelling. Occasionally infections may occur. **Signs or symptoms that may indicate infection of sebaceous cysts include:**

- Redness.
- Tenderness.
- Increased temperature of the skin over the bumps or lumps.
- Grayish white, cheesy, foul smelling material draining from the bump or lump.

DIAGNOSIS

Sebaceous cysts are easily diagnosed on exam by your caregiver. Rarely, a biopsy may be needed to rule out other conditions that may resemble sebaceous cysts.

TREATMENT

- Sebaceous cysts often get better and disappear on their own. They are rarely ever cancerous.
- Sometimes they may become inflamed and tender if they become infected. This may require opening and draining the cyst. Treatment with *antibiotics* (medications which kill germs) may be necessary. When the infection is gone, the cyst may be removed with minor surgery.
- Small inflamed cysts can often be treated by injecting steroid medications or with antibiotics.
- Sometimes sebaceous cysts become large and bothersome. If this happens, surgical removal in your caregiver's office may be necessary.

COMPLICATIONS

- Sebaceous cysts may occasionally become infected and form into painful abscesses.
- Even when the cyst is removed, sebaceous cyst recurrence in not unusual.
- Consult your health care provider anytime you notice any type of growth, bump, or lump on your body.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop any signs of infection.
- Your condition is not improving, or is getting worse.
- You have any other questions or concerns.

Document Released: 11/18/2005 Document Re-Released: 03/16/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.