

Sebaceous Cyst Removal

What is a Sebaceous Cyst?

A cyst is a closed sac that has two main features: a lining and its contents. Cysts will vary in appearance depending on where they are on your body, scalp cysts look different to cysts on the body.

The lining of a cyst looks like the epidermis (the outermost layer of cells in the skin), meaning it will look exactly like the skin you can see on your body. The lining of a scalp cyst is made up of cells like those found in the roots of hairs. Both types of cyst contain a cheesy material, either a liquid or a semi-solid. The content is made of keratin, the material that makes up hair and the outer layer of the skin.

The terminology has changed in recent years, scalp cysts are known as pilar cysts whilst cysts found on the body are known as epidermoid cysts. For ease, most doctors and patients still refer to them as sebaceous cysts.

What causes Sebaceous Cysts?

Sebaceous cysts usually affect young and middle-aged adults. They can appear after a hair follicle has been inflamed, so are more common in patients with acne. Scalp cysts tend to affect women more than men.

Are Sebaceous Cysts hereditary?

Scalp cysts run strongly in some families, being inherited as an autosomal dominant trait. This means that there is a 1 in 2 chance that each child of an affected parent will inherit the condition.

What symptoms will I experience if I have a Sebaceous Cyst?

Both scalp and body cysts grow slowly. Some cysts can become infected from time to time and could be red and sore. They may then discharge cheesy foul-smelling pus. If a cyst is infected, it's important that you see a doctor who may give you antibiotics or let the pus out.



What do Sebaceous Cysts look like?

They are round, sometimes dome-shaped bumps lying just under the surface of the skin. Some are yellow or whitish. A small dark plug is often present, through which it may be possible to squeeze out some of the contents. Cysts range in size from those that are smaller than a pea to those that are several centimetres across, They can occur anywhere on the skin but are more commonly found on the scalp, face, neck, upper body or genital skin.

Can Sebaceous Cysts be removed?

Yes. There are several effective ways to remove a cyst under local anaesthetic. However, it is fairly common for new cysts to grow at a later date, especially on the scalp or genital skin. Sebaceous Cysts are harmless, and small ones that give no trouble can usually be left alone.

How are they removed?

Both scalp and body cysts can be removed under a local anaesthetic. An incision is made and the content of the cyst is removed. It is important that the doctor removes the whole of the sac during the procedure, as doing so reduces the chance of the cyst growing back. Scalp cysts are usually easy and straightforward to remove. Cysts on the body are often firmly stuck down and are much larger than you imagine, often having elongated sacs extending into the surrounding tissue. You may feel a lot of tugging and pulling during the procedure and the wound could end up being larger than you expect. It's rare to get a cyst out through a tiny incision. Bruising is common but will settle down with time. Post-op infection risk is higher than with other kinds of surgery (approx. 15%). Your doctor will advise you on whether they think you need a course of antibiotics following the procedure.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

We will check your wound and remove stitches after one or two weeks. Further follow up appointments may be needed if the wound isn't healing well. There are no extra charges for any follow-up appointments within the first three months.