

## What is a dermatofibroma?

A dermatofibroma (also known as histiocytoma) is a common type of fibrous or scarring reaction that occurs in the deeper layer of the skin. Dermatofibromas are benign (harmless) and cannot turn into skin cancer.

## What does a dermatofibroma look and feel like?

- They can appear anywhere but are most common on the lower legs of young to middle-aged adults, and on the upper arms in females. Dermatofibromas vary in number from one to several
- Most appear as a symmetrical smooth raised bump in the skin, seldom larger than 1 cm in diameter. Occasionally they are flat
- Dermatofibromas can vary in colour although in Caucasians are most commonly pink to skin-coloured in the centre and slightly brown at the edge. In skin of colour, dermatofibromas tend to be brown or black
- Dermatofibromas feel like a small rubbery button lying just under the skin surface, and may dimple (sink down) when gently squeezed between finger and thumb
- Usually there are no symptoms, although some can be painful if knocked. Dermatofibromas on the legs may bleed if caught, for example when shaving

## What causes a dermatofibroma?

- They are more common in females than males
- The exact cause is unknown; however, they often appear after a minor injury to the skin such as an insect bite

## How is a dermatofibroma diagnosed?

- Your healthcare professional may diagnose a dermatofibroma simply by examining you, sometimes with the aid of a dermatoscope, a small hand-held instrument that allows a much more detailed examination
- If the diagnosis is uncertain your healthcare professional might refer you to a specialist

## Referral to a specialist

You may be referred to a dermatologist or a GPwER/GPwSI (a GP who has been trained in relevant areas of dermatology).

Increasingly, the initial referral may be through teledermoscopy, where a picture of your skin lesion is sent to a specialist to advise the best course of action.

Occasionally, a small skin biopsy may be needed, using local anaesthetic, to confirm the diagnosis. This could be done by your GP if they are experienced in skin surgery, or a specialist.

## What are the treatment options for dermatofibromas?

Most dermatofibromas persist. Because they are harmless, treatment is not usually necessary, is not often available on the NHS, and surgical removal of a dermatofibroma nearly always leaves a scar that is much more noticeable than the dermatofibroma itself.

## Things you can do to help yourself

It is very important that you know how to examine your own skin and develop a better understanding of what skin cancer looks like.

For more information on different types of skin cancer please click on **Patient Section Including How to Check your Moles** on the bottom right of the homepage at [www.pcds.org.uk](http://www.pcds.org.uk) – on the next page click the link **Self-examination of Moles**.

## Helping with other skin conditions

If you, a family member, or friend have an undiagnosed skin condition; or you want to learn more about how to treat skin conditions, please visit [www.pcds.org.uk](http://www.pcds.org.uk) – if you click the purple tile near the top of the homepage that reads **'Take a Tour of the PCDS Website'** you can learn how best to use this website.