

Epidermoid cyst

Most commonly known as a sebaceous cyst but also known as epidermoid inclusion cyst, Infundibular cyst, epidermal cyst, epidermal inclusion cyst.

What is an epidermoid cyst?

An epidermoid cyst is a benign walled-off cavity filled with keratin which originates from the hair follicle unit.

What causes an epidermoid cyst?

Epidermoid cysts are the most common type of cyst. They may be primary or they may arise from disrupted follicular structures due to trauma or comedone formation (blackheads).

Multiple cysts may occur in the conjunction with acne vulgaris, Gardner syndrome and in nevoid basal cell carcinoma syndrome.

Tiny superficial epidermoid cysts are known as milia.

What does it look like?

Epidermoid cysts appear as flesh coloured to yellowish, firm, round nodules of variable size. A central pore or punctum may be present.

They are usually symptomless but sometimes discharge a foul smelling, "cheese-like" material. Less frequently, the cysts can be painful due to inflammation or infection.

How is an epidermoid cyst diagnosed?

The diagnosis is usually made by a clinical examination. Sometimes a biopsy may be needed.

How is epidermoid cyst treated?

- Epidermoid cysts that do not concern a person need not be treated.
- Inflamed epidermoid cysts may require treatments with antibiotics. Incision, drainage and/or steroid injections may be helpful in rare cases to speed up the resolution of the inflammation.
- Non-inflamed cysts can be removed surgically and the contents and wall of the cyst drained. However, the cyst may recur if the entire cyst wall is not removed.