

## **Dermatosis Papulosa Nigra (DPN)**

### **What is dermatosis papulosa nigra (DPN)?**

Dermatosis papulosa nigra (DPN) is a benign (harmless) condition where multiple small, brown-black, raised spots appear on the face and neck. DPN is seen most commonly in people with coloured skin (skin of colour) who are of African, Asian, Indian, or Polynesian background. DPN may be considered as cosmetically undesirable.

### **What causes DPN?**

The cause of DPN is unknown but around 50% of those affected have a family history of DPN. It is not contagious and does not spread from person-to-person.

### **What does DPN look like?**

Multiple smooth, small, brown-black raised spots appear on the face and neck. Sometimes they also develop on the upper chest or back. The raised spots are actually tiny seborrheic keratoses.

These spots usually start in young adults, and tend to increase in number with age. Women often have more of these spots compared with men.

The raised spots can occasionally become irritated if scratched or rubbed but generally they cause no problems other than their appearance.

### **How is DPN diagnosed?**

DPN is diagnosed by a doctor looking at the skin and seeing the typical appearance of the raised spots.

Rarely, a skin biopsy may be needed to confirm the diagnosis.

### **How is DPN treated?**

DPN is harmless and does not require any form of treatment. However, various methods for removal are available if desired for cosmetic reasons.

Methods of removal include lightly scraping (curettage), burning (electrocautery) or freezing with liquid nitrogen (cryotherapy). Various types of lasers or medical-grade chemical peels are other treatment options.

All the above treatments carry a risk of causing colour (pigment) change or scarring of the skin, which may be permanent. Treatment does not prevent new spots appearing in the future.