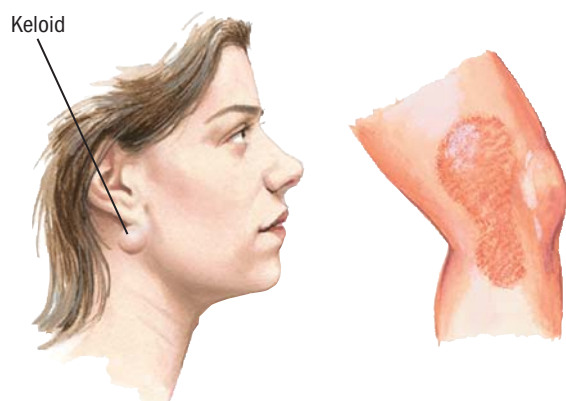


MANAGING YOUR KELOIDS



Keloids and abnormally large (hypertrophic) scars are an overgrowth of scar tissue on the skin. They can appear anywhere, usually in a place that was injured, such as after ear piercing or severe acne.



They can affect people of all skin types, but are more common in people with dark skin.



Your doctor can diagnose keloids and hypertrophic scars by examining you and noting how they look.

What Are Keloids?

Keloids and scars that are hypertrophic (meaning growing abnormally large) are an overgrowth of scar tissue on the skin. They can appear anywhere, usually in a place that was injured, such as after a burn, severe acne, or a scratch.

What Causes Keloids?

Keloids result from too much scar tissue forming as a wound heals. No one knows why they form. They cannot be caught from someone else and aren't skin cancer, but the tendency to get keloids often runs in families. Keloids affect people of all skin types but are more common in people with dark skin.

What Are the Symptoms of Keloids?

Keloids are raised lumps of pink, red, or dark scar tissue that go beyond the original wound. They sometimes start after very small wounds, such as ear piercing. They may grow large and don't get smaller with time, but they may become paler. Keloids are different from hypertrophic scars. A hypertrophic scar is raised, red and lumpy, or uneven. It doesn't spread beyond the original wound. It often gets smaller and paler over time.

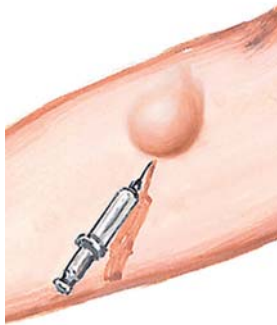
Both hypertrophic scars and keloids are usually painless but can itch. If they form over a joint they may make it harder to move.

How Are Keloids Diagnosed?

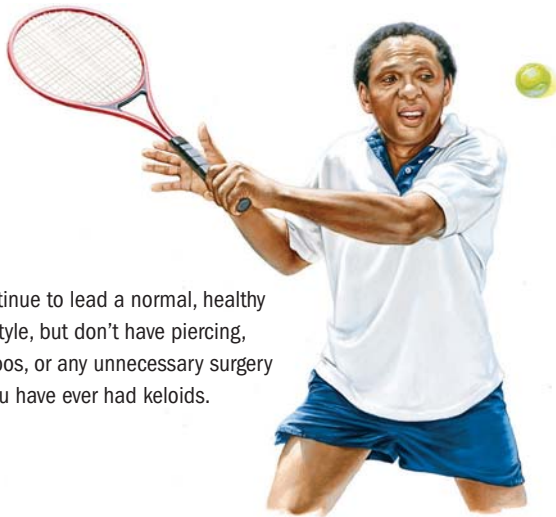
The doctor makes a diagnosis from the look of the scar. Tests are usually not needed.



No one treatment works for everyone, but surgery, injections, dressings, freezing, and lasers have been used. If possible, the best thing may be to leave keloids alone. Talk to your doctor.



Keloids can be injected with steroid drugs to make them smaller. Newer treatments include interferon, retinoic acid, and tacrolimus.



Continue to lead a normal, healthy lifestyle, but don't have piercing, tattoos, or any unnecessary surgery if you have ever had keloids.

How Are Keloids Treated?

No one treatment is effective. With keloids, prevention is better than cure. Avoid body piercing, tattoos, or any kind of unnecessary surgery. If possible, the best thing may be to leave them alone.

Different treatments have had success but don't work for everyone. Keloids may come back in the same areas despite treatment. The various treatments include surgery, steroid injections, dressings, freezing, and lasers.

Surgery usually doesn't work because keloids often come back, sometimes larger than before. Injecting a steroid drug into the keloid may make it smaller. Dressings include pressure bandages or special dressing sheets placed over the area for several weeks or months. Freezing (cryosurgery) can make keloids flatter, and lasers can make the color paler and make the scar flatter.

Certain newer treatments, including chemotherapy drugs, interferon, imiquimod cream, retinoic acid, and tacrolimus, are sometimes successful.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Keloids:

- ✓ **DO** use makeup to help cover your scar if it bothers you. Special products are available.
- ✓ **DO** continue to lead a normal, healthy lifestyle. There are no restrictions for keloids.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor when you see signs of keloids forming.
- ⊘ **DON'T** have piercings, tattoos, or any unnecessary surgery if you have ever had keloids.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American Academy of Dermatology
- Tel: (866) 503-SKIN (7546)
- Website: <http://www.aad.org>