



Pyogenic granuloma

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about pyogenic granulomas. It tells you what they are, what causes them, what can be done about them, and where you can find out more about them.

What is a pyogenic granuloma?

A pyogenic granuloma is a harmless overgrowth of large numbers of tiny blood vessels. It carries no risk of cancer.

What causes a pyogenic granuloma?

Most pyogenic granulomas come up for no obvious reason; but some seem to follow minor damage to the skin, such as a cut that does not heal properly or a prick from a thorn. They can occur at any age, but are most common in children and young adults. During pregnancy they can come up inside the mouth. You cannot catch them from someone else.

Are they hereditary?

No

What are the symptoms of a pyogenic granuloma?

The main problem with pyogenic granulomas is the way that they ooze and bleed so easily after minor knocks. This can be a great nuisance. They can also look ugly, but are not painful. People often worry that their rapid growth and bleeding mean that they are cancerous, even though they are not. However you should always see your doctor if you have a rapidly growing skin lump.

What do pyogenic granulomas look like?

As they are made up of small blood vessels, they are bright red; later they may turn a darker shade. Their surface is shiny and moist but may become crusty after they have bled.

They stick out from the surface of the skin. They are seldom more than 1 cm across. Some have a bumpy surface and look rather like a raspberry; others are narrower where they come out from the skin and look as if they are on a stalk.

They come up quickly over a few days, but tend to stop growing after a few weeks.

They are usually single and can appear anywhere, but are most common on the hands.

How is a pyogenic granuloma diagnosed?

Pyogenic granulomas are harmless - but it is natural to worry about any skin bump that comes up so quickly and bleeds so easily. In fact, most pyogenic granulomas can be recognised by their appearance; but some skin cancers (particularly a type of malignant melanoma that has no pigment in it) can look a bit like them. This is why your doctor will send the specimen to be checked under the microscope in a laboratory if it is removed.

Can a pyogenic granuloma be cured?

Yes – by removing it.

How can a pyogenic granuloma be treated?

A few pyogenic granulomas lose their colour and shrivel with time, but most are such a nuisance that they need to be treated before then. Freezing a pyogenic granuloma with liquid nitrogen can get rid of it but does not provide a specimen that can be checked in the laboratory. The usual treatment is to scrape pyogenic granulomas off with a sharp spoon-like instrument (a curette) after the area has been made numb by an injection of a local anaesthetic. The bleeding area left behind is then sealed with a hot point (cauterised). Sometimes a pyogenic granuloma does come back after it has been removed in this way, and it is then best to cut the area out and to close the wound with stitches.

What can I do?

You should always go straight to your doctor if you have any marks on your skin that are growing or bleeding.

Where can I get more information about pyogenic granulomas?

Web links to detailed leaflets:

www.emedicine.com/ped/topic1244.htm

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001464.htm

www.dermnetnz.org/dna.impetigo/pyo-gran.html

(While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given in this leaflet is accurate, not every treatment will be suitable or effective for every person. Your own doctor will be able to advise in greater detail)

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