



BECKER'S NAEVUS

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about a Becker's naevus. It tells you what it is, what causes it, what can be done about it, and where you can find out more about it.

What is a Becker's naevus?

'Naevus' is the Latin word for birthmark. It is called Becker's after the name of the American Dermatologist that described it. Becker's naevus is sometimes called 'Becker's melanosis' or 'pigmented hairy epidermal naevus'.

Becker's naevus can be present at birth in one in five children and similar numbers of boys and girls can be affected. Although most commonly people will only have one Becker's naevus, it is possible to have more.

What causes a Becker's naevus?

What causes a Becker's naevus is not fully understood. Although some children are born with a Becker's naevus, it usually appears during childhood and early teenage years. One theory is that from birth some people have a small patch of skin with the predisposition to a Becker's naevus.

Is a Becker's naevus hereditary?

No. Although there are some reports of Becker's naevus occurring in more than one family member, it does not usually run in families.

What are the symptoms of a Becker's naevus?

Becker's naevus does not usually cause any problems, although some people may not like the appearance. Acne or, rarely, eczema can sometimes be present in a Becker's naevus.

What does a Becker's naevus look like?

It is a well-defined patch of darker skin with excessive hair and the skin appears slightly thickened. It is usually located on the shoulders or trunk. Rarely, it can be found on the legs. Usually only the skin is affected in Becker's naevus; however, rarely the underlying tissues can be affected, for example the breast, the muscles, the underlying fat tissue and the bones. This is known as Becker's naevus syndrome.

Because this patch of skin is thought to be more sensitive to male hormones, it can become more prominent and with more hairs during puberty.

How is a Becker's naevus diagnosed?

The diagnosis is often made by clinically examining at the affected skin. If unsure then a dermatologist may be asked to review.

Sometimes a small skin sample (known as a skin biopsy) may be taken and checked under the microscope to confirm the diagnosis.

Can a Becker's naevus be cured?

Unfortunately, there is currently no cure for a Becker's naevus. It will not go away on its own.

How can a Becker's naevus be treated?

Usually a Becker's naevus is too large to be surgically removed. Different laser systems have been used to treat both the colour and the hair. Overall the excess hair responds better to laser treatment than the colour. Please note that these laser treatments may not be available on the NHS; your primary care physician may be able to suggest a suitable clinic for laser treatment.

If there is acne or eczema within the Becker's naevus, treatment of these skin conditions can be helpful.

Self care (What can I do?)

The hair on a Becker's naevus can be safely removed by shaving, waxing, threading or using epilation creams, for example; these will not increase the hair-growth.

Where can I get more information about a Becker's naevus?

Web links to detailed leaflets:

<http://www.dermnetz.org/lesions/beckers-naevus.html>

For details of source materials used please contact the Clinical Standards Unit (clinicalstandards@bad.org.uk).

This leaflet aims to provide accurate information about the subject and is a consensus of the views held by representatives of the British Association of Dermatologists: individual patient circumstances may differ, which might alter both the advice and course of therapy given to you by your doctor.

This leaflet has been assessed for readability by the British Association of Dermatologists' Patient Information Lay Review Panel

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