

Skin tags

Skin tags (or cutaneous skin tags) are something I'm asked about a lot, but when I started doing the actual research to write an article I was amazed at how little information there is out there. That rather surprised me considering that statistics say that 60% of the population will have at least one skin tag by the time they reach the age of 65.

I started by trying to find out what exactly skin tags are. I had always been taught that they were a small, benign, non-cancerous, skin growth. They can be the same color as the skin near them or a little darker. They usually occur after mid-life, but can occur earlier. Most experts seem to agree on the above. Most skin tags have a short, narrow stalk that connects them to the surface of the skin. If you have ever accidentally scraped one off, or perhaps cut one off on purpose, you will have discovered that they have quite the blood supply. I know someone who had the doctor cut one off, he just used that cold spray stuff to numb it and then snipped it off, put on a band-aid and sent them on their merry way. I entered the picture a few hours later when it still had not stopped bleeding and was still bleeding heavily. A little Geranium oil and some Bioplasma homeopath had that quickly taken care of. The point is, if you go whacking these things off you can have some exciting moments as well as the risk of scarring. We'll talk about a less traumatic method of removal in a few minutes.

In my research I really couldn't find out much more than I have listed above in regards to what skin tags are. Essentially, scientists can't seem to agree. The one thing they do agree on is that they are harmless, just a cosmetic nuisance.

Then I set out to discover, if I could, what causes them. I was hoping that would prove more fruitful than trying to find out what they are. Woo hoo, that's a laugh. I found articles and research citing all sorts of causes. The most common theory is that since they most often occur in a place where the skin folds (armpits are the most common, but they can also be found on necks, eyelids, under the breasts, the groin area, anyplace where there may be a fold in the skin, and with some people that doesn't even seem to be necessary) they are due to irritation to the skin. This can be from clothing rubbing (necks and armpits), tight clothing (armpits, breast area, groins), and from repetitive rubbing (rubbing your eyes a lot is attributed to the ones on eyelids). They can even be caused by jewelry that is worn constantly.

There doesn't seem to be any real underlying "cause." Some researchers theorize that they are caused by a virus (Human Papiloma virus), others say they are caused by hormones secreted during pregnancy (but both men and women seem to have skin tags in equal numbers so I didn't give much credence to this theory), others attribute them to illegal steroid use (which could be possible since so many of the foods we consume have steroids in them, thus passing them on to us without our knowledge and I consider that to be illegal), and then there are those who believe that it has something to do with insulin resistance. Scientists are finding more and more people who have diabetes type 2 have skin tags, they're also seeing that people who are overweight seem to have more of them. I look at that theory and see that there is a correlation between weight and diabetes type 2 and that if you are overweight you have more skin rubbing against skin. So, I'm back to the beginning theory that they're caused by abrasion, or with the theory of a virus. The Human Papiloma virus was found in 88% of skin tags biopsied from 49 different patients. (Dianzani C, Calvieri S, Pierangeli A, et al. The detection of human papillomavirus DNA in skin tags. *Br J Dermatol* 1998; 138: 649-651.) I favor this theory because if you have an area of friction or abrasion you will be wearing down or even wearing away the skin that protects against the entry of viruses or bacteria. If there is little to no barrier, it is easier for a virus to enter and find a new home.

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How do you treat skin tags? Again, I found a wide variety of answers. Most of the experts say to go to a plastic surgeon and have them surgically removed. As I researched alternative ways of removing them I found two ways that were overwhelmingly found to be effective.

- Detoxify the liver
- Apply an essential oil known for its anti-viral effects

If you have studied anything about the liver (or read our liver cleanse article) then you know that one of the first signs that your liver is getting overloaded is skin problems. That's because the body is trying to get rid of toxins the liver can't handle. You may have acne, a rash, brown spots, skin discolorations, etc. Seems logical to me that if the body has a virus it can't deal with right now it should be capable of tying it up in a little bundle and letting it become a skin tag.

If you want to achieve faster results then you may want to go with an essential oil. The ones I have seen most commonly suggested (and have recommended myself and seen good results) are Lemongrass, Thyme, or Oregano. Please note: Thyme and Oregano are both very hot oils, make sure you do not get them on the skin around the skin tag. Apply the Thyme or Oregano essential oil with a q-tip very carefully so that you only get the oil on the tags (it will cause skin irritation on the healthy skin). After consistent use (times vary depending upon the person and the oil of choice) they will detach and fall off. Apply daily until not needed any longer.

I would say from my research that if you have skin tags your body is giving you a warning sign, notifying you that it would like you to start living healthier and give your liver some tender loving care.

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