

Not all lumps are warts

Warts are benign skin growths. They are raised lumps that result from a thickening of the skin; they have a rough surface and clearly defined edges. They are caused by one of the many types of the human papilloma virus.

Other small lumps or raised growths can be confused with warts but in fact they are other types of benign skin growths that do not have to be treated.



Which growths can be confused with warts?

- Small, soft lumps separated from the skin by a stalk or pedicle. These are found on areas where clothes or skin rub: neck, armpits, groin, eyelids and under the breasts. These small benign growths are called *acrochordons* if they are under 5 mm in diameter and *soft fibroids* if they are bigger than that. They are very common, especially in people who are overweight or who wear tight clothes or chains. They increase in number with age. There is a hereditary predisposition toward them. **In affected areas tight clothes should be avoided.**
- Lumps that are 1-6 mm in diameter, a bright red colour, and usually found on the torso are called *ruby spots*. These are benign

vascular growths, which are very common and increase in number and size with age. There is also a genetic tendency to consider.

- Lumps that have a firm consistency and variable size, and a dark colour (although on fair skins they may be pink). These skin growths are small internal scars on the skin. They are called *dermatofibromas*. They appear particularly in adults, especially on the legs.
- Dark lumps with a patch of dry skin. This is called *seborrheic keratosis*. It is the most frequent skin growth, particularly in the elderly. It has a hereditary component. It does not usually appear below the age of 30.

ALL these growths are **BENIGN** (in other words, noncancerous) and do not cause discomfort. **They do NOT require any treatment.** They are only treated for cosmetic purposes. Even though all these growths are removed, with time more appear. Only isolated growths causing discomfort are treated or removed.



The law explicitly states that **the Public Health Service does not cover the treatment of skin growths for cosmetic purposes.**