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Patient information: Keloids (The Basics)

[Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate](#)

What is a keloid? — A keloid is a growth that happens where the skin has healed from a cut or other injury. It can be painful and itchy, and look different from a normal scar. A person can have just 1 keloid or many. If you have more than 1, they are called “keloids.”

Keloids are more common in people with dark skin. They can also run in families. If someone in your family gets keloids, you might be more likely to get them.

Keloids can form after any injury or procedure that breaks the skin. This can include:

- Piercing – This can be of the ears or another body part.
- A cut that gets infected or leaves a scar
- Acne, after the pimples heal
- Surgery – A keloid can form in the scar.

What are the symptoms of a keloid? — A keloid can look like a lumpy growth ([picture 1](#)). It can:

- Itch
- Hurt when you press on it
- Cause sharp, shooting pain

Keloids are most common on certain body parts. These include:

- Ears
- Neck – One type of keloid happens after a pimple heals on the back of the neck.
- Jaw
- Chest, shoulders, and upper back

Should I see a doctor or nurse? — Yes. If you have a new growth on your skin, see your doctor or nurse. Keloids are not cancer. But some skin growths are cancer. Ask your doctor or nurse to check.

Is there a test for keloids? — No. There is no test. But your doctor or nurse should be able to tell if you have a keloid by looking at it and learning about your symptoms.

How are keloids treated? — Doctors have several different treatments for keloids. Possible treatments include:

- Giving an injection (shot) of medicine in the keloid - This can make it flatten out. Doctors can try different medicines to see which one works best.
- Doing surgery to take the keloid off – After surgery, the doctor usually gives a shot of medicine in the area. This can help keep the keloid from coming back.
- Putting a sheet of sticky material over the keloid – This might make the keloid hurt or itch less.
- Cryosurgery – In this procedure, the doctor uses a very cold liquid to freeze the keloid
- Pressure earrings – These are special earrings that press on the holes after you get your ears pierced. They could help stop keloids from forming when the holes heal.

- Radiation – This treatment uses high doses of X-rays to destroy keloids
- Laser treatment – This treatment uses strong light to destroy keloids
- Putting a prescription cream on the area – The doctor might prescribe this to use after surgery.

Keloids can be hard to treat. They often come back after treatment. Giving more than 1 treatment at a time, such as a shot of medicine after surgery, can work better than just 1 treatment.

Can keloids be prevented? — Yes. You can lower your chances of getting keloids by:

- Not having surgery or procedures that break the skin, if possible. For example, you can:
 - Avoid getting your ears or other body parts pierced
 - Avoid having surgery to take off a mole (unless your doctor or nurse says you need surgery)
- Treating acne or a cut right away
- NOT shaving your neck – This can irritate pimples and make them form keloids after they heal.

If you have a cut or scar, you can:

- Keep the cut or wound moist while it heals – You can put a thin layer of petroleum jelly on it. Cover it with a bandage or gauze. Keep the bandage clean and dry.
- Cover scars when you are in the sun – Do this for 3 months after the scar forms. You can also use sunscreen on the scar.

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GRAPHICS

Keloids from acne



A keloid is a growth that forms where the skin has healed from a cut or other injury. These keloids formed on skin that healed from acne.

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