

△ GENERAL INFORMATION

The human skin has several types of very tiny glands just under its surface. One such type is the sweat gland; another is the oil (*sebaceous*) gland that puts out very tiny amounts of very thick oils. Sometimes, the very tiny pore that lets these oils come to the surface gets plugged. Because the gland keeps on producing the oily material, it becomes enlarged. When it is large enough that you can feel it, it is called a *sebaceous cyst*. The material in it gradually becomes thick, has a cheese-like appearance, and has a sweaty odor (Fig. 1).

- A sebaceous cyst can stop growing when it is pea-sized or it can continue to grow until it is as big as a golf ball.
- Sebaceous cysts are not cancerous, and they never become cancerous.

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sebaceous cysts usually appear as a smooth, dome-shaped growth in the skin, most commonly in the head and neck and upper back.
- They do not hurt unless they are infected.

DIAGNOSIS

- Usually, the diagnosis can be made by taking the history and doing a careful examination of the lump.

○ TREATMENT

- Removing the sebaceous cyst by an operation is the only way to cure the problem.

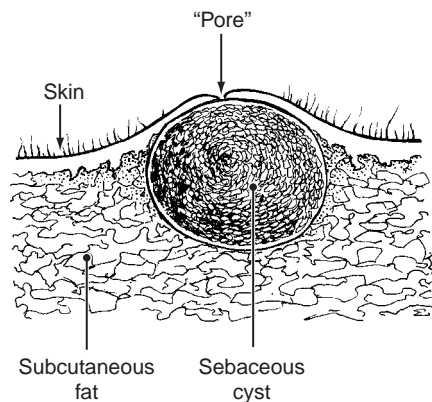


Figure 1. Usually a sebaceous cyst is removed entirely, including the “sac” that is part of it.

PREOPERATIVE PREPARATION

- Do not eat or drink anything for 4 hours before the operation.

□ OPERATION

- The skin over the sebaceous cyst will be painted with an antiseptic solution and surrounded with towels.
- A very fine, short needle will be used to inject an anesthetic around the area so that it will become completely numb.
- A cosmetic incision will be made and the cyst removed entirely.
- The operation usually takes less than 30 minutes.
- The incision will be closed in a similar cosmetic manner.
- If the cyst is infected and red and full of pus, then the wise thing is to simply make a small incision and let the pus out. A few weeks later, when things have quieted down and the sebaceous cyst is much smaller, it can be totally excised as described above.

POSTOPERATIVE CARE

- You should be able to go home directly after the operation.
- Arrangements will be made for your follow-up office visit and stitch removal.

⊕ HOME CARE

- Resume your usual activities.
- You may shower as you wish with any dressings on or off.
 - There may be narrow strips of tape across the incision. It's all right if they get wet. They will be removed in the doctor's office.
 - After you dry yourself, replace any dressings with clean, dry ones.
- Pain is minimal and can be controlled with over-the-counter medicine.

☞ CALL OUR OFFICE IF

- The incision becomes red or swollen, or there is drainage from it.
- You develop a temperature higher than 100°F.
- You have any questions.