

# DOWN SYNDROME AND Syringomas

Syringomas (seer-in-go-mas) are small, skin-colored bumps that can happen on the face in people with Down syndrome.

## WHAT CAUSES SYRINGOMAS?

Syringomas are small, benign (noncancerous) growths on the skin. They develop from sweat glands. Sweat glands help keep the body cool by making sweat. When sweat glands overreact, they can grow to form syringomas. People with Down syndrome have an extra copy of chromosome 21. This can lead to changes in skin proteins and cause syringomas.

## WHAT DO SYRINGOMAS LOOK LIKE?

Syringomas are:

- » Round, tiny, hard bumps on the skin.
- » They can be yellow, brown, pink, or skin-colored.
- » They are commonly seen around the eyes. They may also appear on the cheeks, neck, and chest.
- » Syringomas usually have no symptoms.

They typically occur around puberty. Syringomas are often on the neck, armpits, chest, abdomen, and groin area. On rare occasions, they can cause discomfort, especially when sweating.

Syringomas often appear slowly over time. When many syringomas develop suddenly, this is called eruptive syringomas. This is less common.

## HOW ARE SYRINGOMAS DIAGNOSED?

- » Your doctor can usually diagnose syringomas by simply examining the bumps.
- » Sometimes, a biopsy is taken to rule out other skin conditions. During a biopsy, your doctor will numb the skin and remove a small portion. The removed piece of skin is looked at with a microscope to see if it is a syringoma.

## WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS FOR SYRINGOMAS?

Syringomas do not require treatment and can be hard to make go away. You can talk to your child's doctor about treatment options if they are bothering your child.

### SYRINGOMA FAST FACTS

- » People with Down syndrome are around **30 times more likely** to get syringomas than other people.
- » Around **20%** of people with Down syndrome have syringomas.
- » Syringomas are twice more common in **females** than in males.
- » Syringomas often develop in **teenagers or young adults**.
- » Syringomas are **harmless** and do not need to be treated.
- » Syringomas can **recur** after treatment.

# TREATMENT OPTIONS

## >> No Treatment

- » Syringomas are harmless. If they do not bother your child, they may not need any treatment.
- » Like freckles or many birthmarks, they can be thought of as something that makes someone unique.

## >> Medications

- » **Topical or oral retinoids** – These medications can help the appearance of syringomas. They belong to a group of drugs derived from vitamin A. Your doctor should discuss the risks and benefits with you. The most common side effect is dry skin.
- » **Trichloroacetic acid (TCA)** – This is a skin peel that is often used to treat acne. Once the acid is applied to the skin, it causes the skin to peel. Sometimes, this can help the syringomas to dry up and peel off. TCA peels can cause discomfort such as pain or stinging. If done correctly by a doctor, it should not cause scarring.
- » **Prevention** – Some patients may develop fewer syringomas if they are carefully caring for the skin. This can include gentle exfoliation, regular use of sunscreen, and a healthy diet rich in vitamins A and E.

## >> Other Treatments

The following treatment options can help syringomas but are painful. Be sure to balance your child's ability to tolerate pain when considering these options. Talk to your doctor if you would like to learn more about these options:

- » Laser therapy
- » Cryotherapy
- » Electrosurgery
- » Dermabrasion
- » Surgical removal

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER TREATMENT?

Although these treatment options may be successful, it is possible that syringomas will reappear. This is because syringomas can have roots in the deeper layers of the skin. If syringomas recur, it is safe to treat them again. Syringoma treatment may cause scarring and changes in skin color. People with darker skin types are at greater risk for these changes.



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