Treatment of benign perianal skin lesions in secondary care

Policy author: SY&B CCGs
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Policy Summary
Anal skin tag removal is not routinely funded by SY&B CCGs¹. This policy relates to the treatment of benign skin lesions in the perianal area. The treatment of benign lesions elsewhere on the body is covered by SY&B CCGs Management of Benign skin lesions policy.

Eligibility criteria
SY&B CCGs will only fund surgical treatment of benign skin lesions in the perianal area when one or more of the following conditions are met:

- There is doubt about the benign nature of the skin lesion
- Viral warts in immunocompromised patients where underlying malignancy may be masked.
- Recommended by GU Med when conservative treatment has failed

If there is a need for treatment on clinical grounds outside of these criteria, the clinician is referred to the Individual Funding Request policy for further information.

Rationale for the policy
Anal skin tags, or rectal skin tags, are common and usually harmless growths that hang off the skin around the outside of the anus. They may be mistaken for warts or piles (haemorrhoids). Anal skin tags may also be called hypertrophied papillae or fibroepithelial polyps. They are not contagious but may be due to inflammation, a lesion, anal injury or skin left behind after treatment for a haemorrhoid.

Although anal skin tags are not a risk to health, they may cause problems in maintaining cleanliness after using the toilet. Skin tags may also trap moisture and cause irritation. They may also become irritated through contact (rubbing) with clothing or the movement associated with sitting.

Anal skin tags may be checked by a doctor to make sure they are harmless and not a malignant or cancerous growth².

It is generally accepted that anal skin tags require very little treatment and the majority of patients with simple skin tags can be reassured and discharged with general advice and guidance on how to manage their symptoms. These may amount to minor irritation, pruritis and occasional soreness.

Although the majority of patients can be managed in this way, there are instances where surgical treatment is clinically indicated, this includes uncertainty about the nature of the skin tag, and possible malignancy.
References


2. Lumps and swellings NHS Choices