What is DFSP?

Dermatofibrosarcoma Protuberans (DFSP) is a tumor of the skin. It is a rare type of sarcoma (soft tissue cancer). It comprises fewer than 0.1% of all cancers and 1% of all soft tissue sarcomas.

DFSP tumors occur in the dermis layer of the skin (see picture on 3rd page). They are slow growing, and spread laterally or sideways. They may increase in size more rapidly during pregnancy. If left untreated they can come through the skin, ulcerate and become painful. If they are not completely removed they will likely return in the same area. In very rare case or cases left untreated, DFSP can spread to other areas of your body.

DFSP occurs slightly more often in men than women (57% vs. 43%) and can occur in all races. It is rare in childhood and affects adults aged 20-50 most often. Approximately 50% of DFSP tumors are found on the trunk, 35% are found on the arms and legs, and 15% are located on the head and neck area.

How is it Diagnosed?

Usually, it is first noticed as a skin nodule or lump. They can be quite small (<1 inch) or grow to be several inches in size. They may be bluish, red-brown, or flesh colored. DFSP tumors will appear as a nodule with well-defined edges; however, beneath the skin the tumor spreads with tentacle-like projections- which is why they are locally aggressive and can reoccur.
How is it Treated?

Surgical removal is the main treatment used for DFSP. It is recommended that these be removed with a wide rim of normal tissue (called a “margin”) in order to remove all the tentacles and decrease the chance of recurrence. Sometimes a skin graft is needed if the involved area is large.

The surgery is a called wide excision, which is usually done under general anesthesia.

Radiation therapy is rarely needed in the treatment of DFSP. Chemotherapy is not used to treat DFSP.
Skin Anatomy

Skin Layers:
- Epidermis
- Dermis
- Subcutaneous