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Generalised essential telangiectasia

What is generalised essential telangiectasia?

Telangiectasia is the term used to describe the permanent dilation of small blood vessels, creating small, red markings on the skin and mucous membranes. Essential or primary telangiectasia refers to capillary dilation of unknown origin. No preceding or coexisting skin or internal disease is present. Generalised essential telangiectasia is just one type of primary telangiectasia and is given this name because of its widespread distribution pattern over the body. Other primary telangiectases include [angioma serpiginosum](#), [ataxia-telangiectasia](#), [angiomas](#) and spider naevi.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Generalised essential telangiectasia is characterised by the following:

- Red or pink dilated capillary blood vessels, usually less than 0.2mm in diameter in a lacework or branch-like pattern
- Most often occur on the feet, ankles and lower legs but may appear on the trunk and upper body parts such as hands and arms
- Occasionally numerous telangiectases join together to form a diffuse red patch
- When pressure is placed on the affected sites, blanching occurs temporarily before blood refills the space
- Usually symptomless but tingling or numbness has been reported

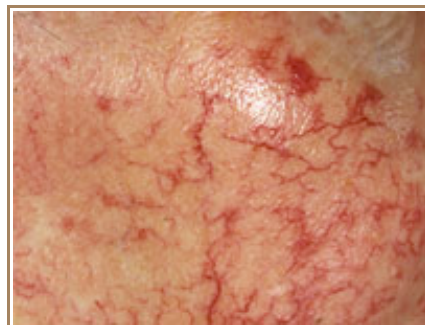
Why does it happen and who is at risk?

The cause of telangiectasia remains unclear. Sometimes there may be a family history. It usually first appears around 40–50 years of age and affects women more often than men.

It is not associated with varicose veins or other venous disorders. Environmental factors such as sun exposure may possibly play a part in its development.

Telangiectases may be slow or fast to develop and usually spread to other parts of the body. They persist indefinitely and do not spontaneously resolve. Apart from the emotional distress that may be caused by the telangiectases, generalised essential telangiectasia is a benign condition that is not associated with any physical complications.

Essential telangiectasia





What treatments are available?

It is very difficult to remove the telangiectases of generalised essential telangiectasia. Patients whom are self-conscious may use cover-up cosmetics or self-tanning lotions to hide the telangiectases.

They are usually unresponsive to [sclerotherapy](#). Recently, various [vascular lasers](#) (frequency-doubled Nd-YAG, [copper bromide](#) and pulse-dye lasers) have shown promise in the treatment of generalised essential telangiectasia.

Related information

References:

Book: Textbook of Dermatology. Ed Rook A, Wilkinson DS, Ebling FJB, Champion RH, Burton JL. Fourth edition. Blackwell Scientific Publications.

On DermNet NZ:

- [Vascular skin lesions](#)

Other websites:

- [Generalised essential telangiectasia](#) - e-medicine dermatology, the online textbook

Books:

See the [DermNet NZ bookstore](#)

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DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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