

“What is this brown patch on my chest?”

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A 22-year-old male presented with a five-year history of a slowly expanding brown patch localized to the right upper chest area. The condition was asymptomatic. No previous medical attention had been sought.

What is your diagnosis?

Becker's nevus, also known as Becker's melanosis, is a unilateral acquired hyperpigmented or hairy patch that typically presents as an asymptomatic slowly expanding brown area on the shoulder, pectoral area or back of teenage males. The patches are of varying sizes with irregular borders. Rare congenital and familial forms have been described. The pathogenesis of Becker's nevus is unknown, however androgens may be implicated.

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The term Becker's nevus is somewhat of a misnomer, as histologically it contains no nevus cells. The condition can be associated with smooth muscle hamartomas. There is no association with malignancy. The condition is often-times confused with a non-hairy *café-au-lait* patch.



Figure 1. Slowly expanding brown patch.

The diagnosis is based on history and clinical presentation. A biopsy would confirm the diagnosis of Becker's nevus.

The condition itself is largely aesthetic in nature. Patients should be reassured and educated regarding the benign nature of the condition. There is no uniformly effective treatment for the pigmentation of Becker's nevus. Treatment with lasers that target pigment have been tried but have not been uniformly successful. The hypertrichosis can be treated by laser hair removal laser or electrolysis. The hyperpigmentation may fade slightly over time.

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Dr. Gupta completed his Dermatology Fellowship training at Harvard University and currently practices in Toronto, Ontario with a special interest in Laser Dermatology.