



What is Acanthosis Nigricans (AN)?

Acanthosis Nigricans (AN) is an easy to identify skin marker with darker, thick, velvety skin in body folds and creases but especially the back of the neck.

This condition usually appears slowly.

AN is most commonly related to high blood insulin levels, a condition called insulin resistance. Insulin resistance is seen in people who are overweight or obese, making them more likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

Q: Where is AN found on the body?

A: AN is most often found on the neck. It is also found on armpits, elbows, knuckles, knees and the groin area. The back and sides of the neck are the easiest areas to check.

Q: How does AN progress?

A: Early AN shows up as a small line of darker skin less than one centimeter (less than ½ inch) wide. It can grow to over 3 centimeters (more than 1 inch) wide and can circle the entire neck.

Q: Why screen for AN?

A: More and more children are being diagnosed with pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes. The AN skin marker can be a sign of serious existing health conditions and an indicator that even more serious health conditions, such as diabetes, may develop. AN screening, diagnosis and treatment can help prevent diabetes and other risks from obesity so that children might become healthier adults.

Q: Why should I be concerned?

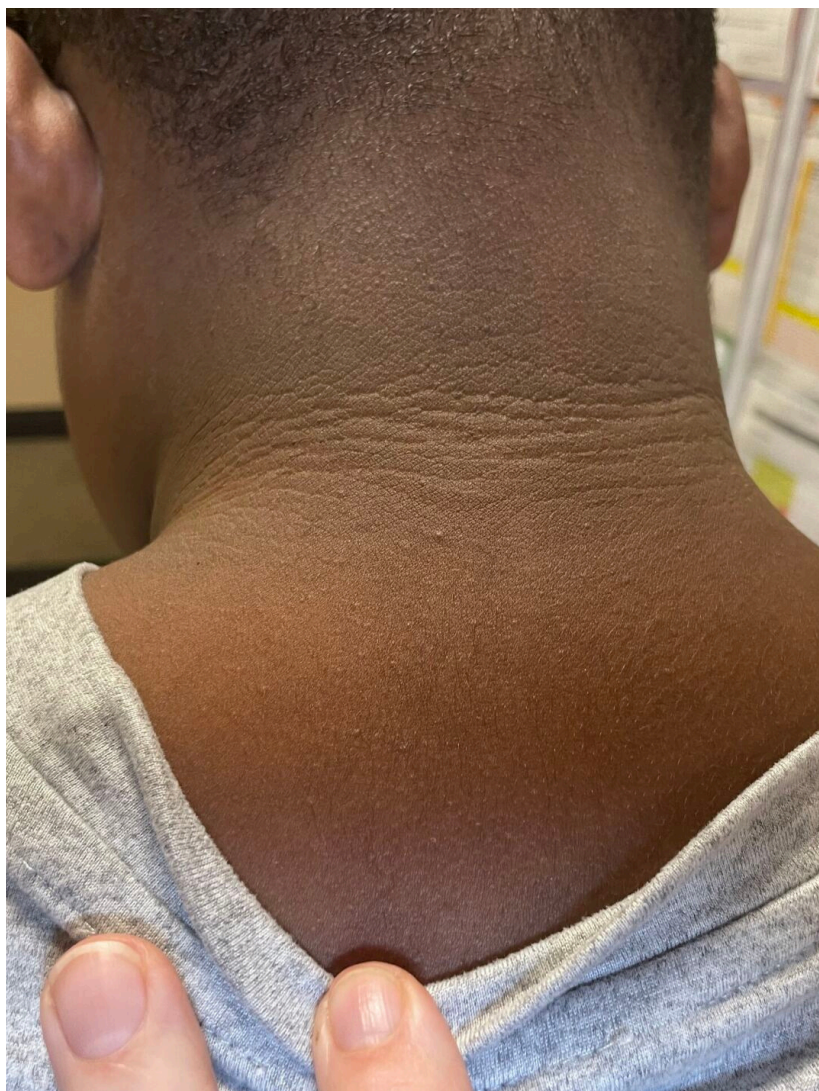
A: AN can be a sign of high insulin levels and increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Individuals with persistent elevated insulin levels are at risk for heart problems, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Individuals with obesity are more likely to have this skin marker.

Q: What can I do about AN diagnosis?

A: If you or a family member have been diagnosed with AN, consult with your primary care provider. Ask your primary care provider to check your hemoglobin A1c and fasting glucose levels. In addition to other treatments, your physician may recommend nutrition counseling and exercise.

Skin areas with AN can look dirty, but they're not. Scrubbing the skin can irritate it. Gently clean the skin and don't use bleaches, skin scrubs, or exfoliating treatments. Eating a healthy diet and getting regular physical activity can help lower insulin levels and improve skin appearance. It can help to:

- Eat whole grains and plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Drink water or low-fat milk instead of soda, juice, or other sugary drinks
- Limit highly processed foods, fatty foods, and sugary treats
- Be physically active every day



Q: What happens during a screening?

A: A trained health professional looks at the neck for signs of skin discoloration. Next, the area may be felt to determine thickness. Even a small amount of skin thickness and darkness is diagnostic for acanthosis nigricans. AN can be familial or related to other health problems also.

For more information, contact your health care provider or go to www.cardiacwv.org.



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