

SKIN CANCER - SELF EXAMINATION

Self examination of the skin aids in the recognition of any new or evolving lesions. Consult your doctor if changes are noticed.

1. Examine your body front and back in the mirror, then right and left sides, arms raised.
2. Bend the elbows and look carefully at forearms and upper arms and palms.
3. Look at the backs of the legs and feet, spaces between toes and the soles.
4. Examine the back of the neck and the scalp with a hand mirror. Part the hair for a closer look at the scalp.
5. Finally, check the back and buttocks with a hand mirror.



"Specialising in the microscopic diagnosis of skin cancer"
Pathologist: Dr Ian Katz

Level 1, Suite 6
32 Florence St
Hornsby NSW 2077
t: (02) 9482 1050
f: (02) 9482 4512
e: pathology@southernsun.com.au



PATIENT INFORMATION

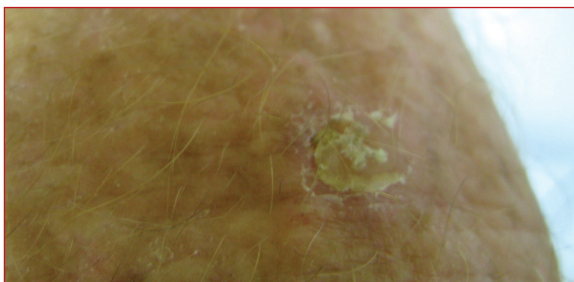
www.southernsun.com.au

PATIENT INFORMATION



ACTINIC KERATOSIS

ACTINIC KERATOSIS (AK), also known as solar keratosis, is a precancerous lesion of the epidermis (outer layer of the skin) that is caused by long-term exposure to sunlight. Chronic sunlight exposure alters the keratinocytes (cells that make up the majority of the epidermis) and causes areas of your skin to become scaly, rough, discoloured and sometimes tender to touch.



AKs are most commonly found on sun-exposed areas such as the face, lips, ears, neck, scalp, forearms and backs of hands. People who have fair skin and light-coloured hair and eyes are at the greatest risk of developing AKs. Individuals who are immunosuppressed, either by cancer chemotherapy treatments or organ transplants and who have an immunodeficiency disorder, are also considered high risk for developing AKs.

AKs are not life threatening as long as they are diagnosed and treated in the early stages. If left untreated, aggressive AKs have the potential to progress into squamous cell carcinoma, a serious type of skin cancer. Therefore, it is important to report any suspicious skin lesions to your doctor.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF?

Because chronic overexposure to sunlight is the leading cause of AKs, sun avoidance, especially during the peak sunlight hours of 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., is an important preventive measure to help reduce the risk of developing this pre-cancerous lesion.

Limit your exposure to the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays by wearing broad-brimmed hats and protective, tightly woven clothing. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen rated SPF-30+, on all exposed skin, including lips, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunscreen frequently. Avoid tanning salons and artificial tanning devices.

Inspect your entire body regularly for any skin changes, especially those already mentioned, and routinely visit your doctor for a skin examination.

Don't become a statistic

More than 50% of people will develop an AK in their lifetime. Since cumulative sun exposure increases with age, older people are more likely to develop AKs. Patients with multiple AKs have a lifetime risk of progression to squamous cell carcinoma of 5% to 9%.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Your doctor will often diagnose and treat AKs based on clinical appearance alone, but sometimes a skin biopsy is needed. After a dermatopathologist assesses your skin biopsy tissue under a microscope and determines the lesion is an AK, your doctor will discuss several treatment options with you. Your treatment may vary based on the location, size of the lesion and the amount of AKs you have developed. Your age and general health will also be taken into consideration. Common treatment options are cryosurgery (freezing the lesion with liquid nitrogen), topical chemotherapy creams, photodynamic therapy, or even surgery. Your doctor will help you decide which option is best for you.



healthy skin saves lives