

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”
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SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA

SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA (SCC) is a major type of cancer that arises from the outer epidermal layer of the skin and mucous membranes and occurs most commonly on areas exposed to the sun. If untreated, squamous cell carcinoma may penetrate and destroy underlying tissue. In a small percentage of cases, this tumor can spread (metastasize) to distant organs and may be fatal.

Chronic sun exposure is the leading cause of squamous cell carcinoma, especially in people with fair skin, light hair and blue, green or grey eyes. Other factors that may contribute to the development of this cancer include burns, scars, exposure to radiation or chemicals, chronic inflammatory conditions and immunosuppression. Although more likely to develop in fair-skinned individuals, squamous cell carcinoma may occur in dark-skinned people, especially at sites of preexisting inflammatory conditions or burns.

Signs that may indicate the presence of squamous cell carcinoma include scaly red patches, elevated growth with a central depression, wart-like growths, nodules and open sores. All of these types of lesions may develop a crusted surface or bleed.

HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF?

Because chronic overexposure to sunlight is the leading cause of squamous cell carcinoma, 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 skin cancer.

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

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

Don't become a statistic

SCC is the second most common skin cancer (after basal cell carcinoma), affecting more than 10,000 Australians each year. When completely treated, the cure rate for SCC is greater than 95 percent. The incidence of developing SCC increases with age and these lesions tend to occur more often in males than females. A person who has had an SCC or even a basal cell carcinoma has an increased risk of developing another, emphasising the need for close follow-up.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

After sections of tissue from a biopsy of your skin are assessed under a microscope by a dermatopathologist and determined to be squamous cell carcinoma, your doctor will recommend several treatment options. Your doctor's recommendations for therapy depend on the size, location and subtype of squamous cell carcinoma. Your age and general health are also taken into consideration.

The more common treatment option is excisional surgery but cryotherapy with liquid nitrogen or even topical creams could be considered for very early lesions. Your doctor will discuss these treatment options with you.



healthy skin saves lives