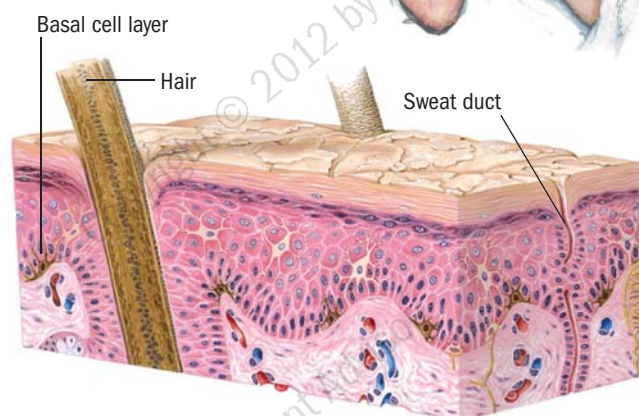


MANAGING YOUR BASAL CELL SKIN CANCER



Exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun or tanning booth increases the risk of basal cell carcinoma (BCC), the most common type of skin cancer. It usually develops after age 40, but you most likely increased your risk of getting it when you were younger.



Basal cells are at the bottom of the epidermis—the outermost layer of the skin.



Risk factors

- Fair skin
- Freckles
- Burn more than tan in the sun
- Work outdoors
- Have HIV
- Family history of basal cell cancer

The doctor will suspect BCC based on the appearance of the skin but will need to do a biopsy for diagnosis.



What Is Basal Cell Skin Cancer?

The most common type of skin cancer is basal cell carcinoma (BCC). It grows very slowly and almost never spreads to other parts of the body. It usually grows on parts of the head and neck that had a lot of sun exposure. It occurs more commonly after age 40.

What Causes BCC?

Exposure to ultraviolet light (both UVA and UVB) from the sun or light in tanning salons increases the risk of BCC.

Risk of getting BCC is also greater for people who have fair skin and tend to freckle or burn instead of tan. Repeated sunburns or excessive childhood sun exposures, an outdoor job, HIV, medicine that suppresses the body's infection-fighting system, personal or family history of BCC, and radiation treatment can also increase risk.

What Are the Symptoms of BCC?

BCC usually does not cause any symptoms; however, it can sometimes bleed or scab. It may also be itchy, but it usually doesn't hurt.

Doctors classify the different types of BCC according to shape, appearance, and color. The most common have a raised, white or pink border and a central depression.

How Is BCC Diagnosed?

The doctor will suspect BCC based on the appearance of the skin but will need a biopsy to confirm the diagnosis. In a biopsy, a small piece of the skin area is removed and sent to the laboratory for study under a microscope.

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If your biopsy results show BCC, your doctor will remove it completely. Several methods are available depending on its location and your medical history.



Always wear sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher whenever you're in the sun. Teach your children the importance of sunscreen to reduce their risk of getting BCC.



Get a yearly skin examination. Your doctor may suggest an examination more than once a year.

How Is BCC Treated?

Treatment usually consists of doing a biopsy and later removing the skin lesion. Sometimes, the doctor will remove the abnormal area completely without doing a biopsy if the area is small.

BCC may in rare cases recur after treatment, especially on the ears, eyelids, scalp, and nose.

Other treatment methods are electrosurgery (using an electric needle), cryosurgery (freezing), radiation therapy, and Mohs' surgery. Mohs' surgery is a special method for removing BCCs on the nose or eyelid or large BCCs, or for recurrent BCC.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing BCC:

- ✓ **DO** follow all your doctor's instructions after treatment.
- ✓ **DO** resume usual activities after you go home.
- ✓ **DO** avoid sunburns (especially small children).
- ✓ **DO** have a skin examination yearly, or more often if your doctor recommends it.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have a new mole or abnormal skin area, an area that doesn't heal or that bleeds often, a raised skin mole with a central depressed area, a mole that changes shape or color or that has irregular or unclear borders, or a mole that is asymmetric (one side looks different from the other).
- ✓ **DO** wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher, protective clothing, and hats.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if the incision becomes red and swollen or has drainage or if you have a temperature higher than 100° F.
- ⊘ **DON'T** go in the sun when it's hottest, especially from 11 am to 3 pm during summer days.
- ⊘ **DON'T** delay seeing your doctor if you have any warning signs of skin cancer.

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NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American Academy of Dermatology
Tel: (866) 503-SKIN (503-7546)
Website: <http://www.aad.org>
- American Cancer Society
Tel: (800) ACS-2345 (227-2345)
Website: <http://www.cancer.org/>