

Skin Cancer

Squamous Cell Carcinoma

Definitions

Squamous cell:

A thin, flat cell of the surfaces of the skin and linings of various organs.

Epidermis:

The top layer of skin.

Carcinoma:

A type of cancerous, or malignant, tumor originating on the surface of the body or in a solid organ.

Pathologist:

A physician who examines tissues and fluids to diagnose disease in order to assist in making treatment decisions.

What Is Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma?

The second most common skin cancer, Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma affects 200,000 Americans each year. This type of cancer begins and usually is confined to the epidermis for sometime. This type of cancer has a high cure rate but can cause disfiguring, complications or even death if it is neglected and allowed to spread.

Who is most likely to have Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma?

This slow-growing disease affects individuals who have regular exposure to sunlight.

Until recently, this cancer was most common in older people, particularly men who worked outdoors. Now, however, more women and younger individuals are being diagnosed with Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma, especially those who spend leisure time in the sun. People with fair skin; blonde or red hair; or blue, green or gray eyes have higher than average risk.

Avoid long exposure to the sun, especially at midday, to prevent Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma. If outdoors for a longtime, consider wearing a hat, sunscreen, long sleeves and a long skirt or pants.

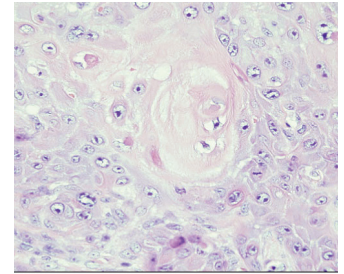
What characterizes Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma?

Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma occurs most frequently on areas of the body frequently exposed to the sun – the face, ears, neck, scalp, shoulders, and back. The rim of the ear and lower lip are especially vulnerable to these cancers. Tumors sometimes develop on areas where the skin has suffered injury: sun damage, burns, scars, sores or sites exposed to x-rays or chemicals. Chronic skin inflammation also may encourage the development of Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma.

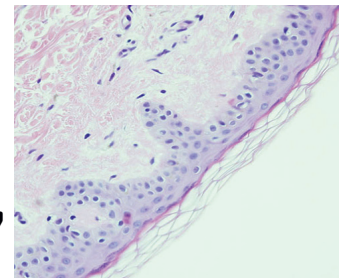
Depending upon your risk factors, your physician may recommend that your skin be examined regularly to detect skin cancer. Watch for changes in size, color, texture and appearance, as well as skin pain, bleeding, itching, crusting or inflammation. Common characteristics of Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma include a bleeding or non-healing sore, a reddish patch, or an elevated or wart-like growth. Also, pre-cancerous conditions such as actinic keratosis, leukoplakia and Bowen's disease can develop into Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma.

How does a pathologist diagnose Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma?

Your primary care physician or specialist will gather a **biopsy specimen** from an area of the skin with Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma characteristics for the pathologist to examine under a microscope.



Squamous Cell Carcinoma has a high cure rate but can cause complications or even death if allowed to spread.



Normal skin cells.

For more information, go to: www.skincancer.org (SkinCancer Foundation) or www.nlm.nih.gov (National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health). Type the keywords Squamous Cell Skin Carcinoma or Skin Cancer into the search box.