

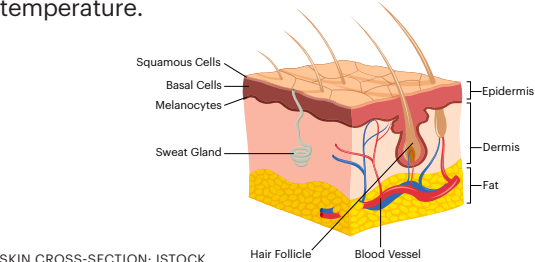


Skin Cancer 101

The Skin Cancer Foundation is here to provide you with the tools you need to prevent, detect and treat skin cancer. If you see anything **new, changing** or **unusual** on your skin, see a dermatologist.

SKIN: YOUR LARGEST ORGAN

The skin is the largest organ in the human body. It forms a waterproof, protective wrap over your entire body, serving as a barrier to infection and helping to control your body temperature.



SKIN CROSS-SECTION: ISTOCK

Skin Facts

The average adult human has 2,800 square inches of skin — that’s about 22 square feet of skin!

In just a square inch of skin, there are approximately:

- 60,000 melanocytes, which give skin its color
- 1,000 nerve endings
- 650 sweat glands
- 20 blood vessels

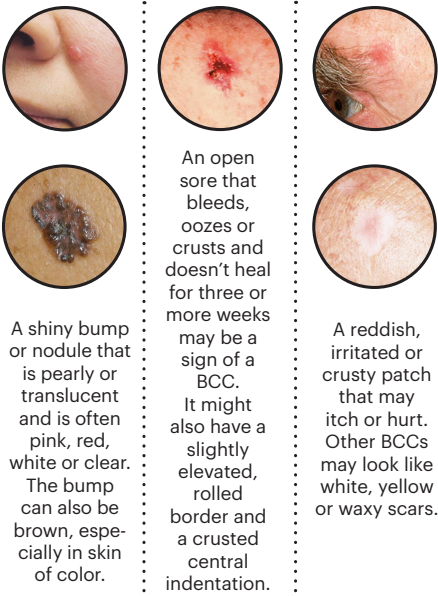
WHAT IS SKIN CANCER?

Skin cancer is the out-of-control growth of abnormal cells in the epidermis, the outermost skin layer, caused by unrepaired DNA damage that triggers mutations. These mutations lead the skin cells to multiply rapidly and form a malignant tumor. It may grow inward and outward, eventually becoming visible on the surface of the skin. The two main causes of skin cancer are the sun’s harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays and the use of UV indoor tanning beds. The good news is that if skin cancer is caught early, your dermatologist can treat it with little or no scarring and high odds of eliminating it entirely. Often, the doctor may even detect the growth at a precancerous stage, before it has become a full-blown skin cancer.

Basal Cell Carcinoma

This is the **most common** form of skin cancer, with an estimated 3.6 million cases in the U.S. each year. Basal cell carcinomas (BCCs) are abnormal, uncontrolled growths that arise from the skin’s basal cells in the epidermis. These cancers most often develop on skin areas typically exposed to the sun, especially the face, ears, neck, scalp, shoulders and back. Most BCCs are caused by the combination of intermittent, intense exposure and cumulative, long-term exposure to UV radiation from the sun or from tanning beds. BCCs can be locally destructive if not detected and treated early. Occasionally these cancers metastasize (spread) and in very rare instances they can be fatal.

Basal Cell Carcinomas



ONE IN FIVE AMERICANS

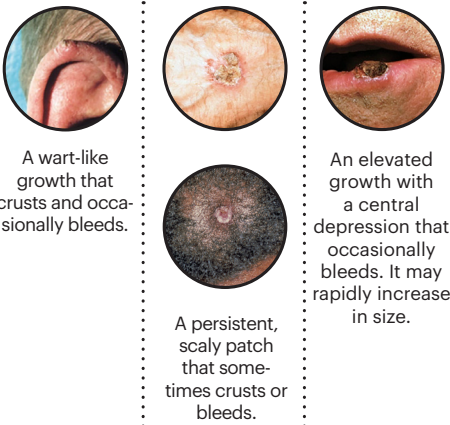
will develop skin cancer by the age of 70. Knowledge is your greatest weapon in fighting it. This primer gives you an overview of the major types of skin cancer and the precancers that can develop into skin cancer if left untreated. Let us help!

SkinCancer.org

Squamous Cell Carcinoma

This is the **second most common form** of skin cancer. Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is an uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells arising from the squamous cells in the epidermis. An estimated 1.8 million cases of SCC are diagnosed each year in the U.S. Cumulative, long-term exposure to UV radiation from the sun and indoor tanning causes most SCCs. They are common on sun-exposed areas such as the ears, face, scalp, neck and hands, where the skin often reveals signs of sun damage, including wrinkles and age spots. SCCs can sometimes grow rapidly and metastasize if not detected and treated early. The number of deaths from SCC in the U.S. each year is unknown but may be several thousand.

Squamous Cell Carcinomas



Actinic Keratoses

The most common type of precancerous skin lesion, actinic keratosis (AK), typically appears on skin that has been frequently exposed to the sun or to artificial UV light from tanning beds. AKs often occur on the face, lips, ears, scalp, back of the hands and forearms. They typically feel rough to the touch and look like pink, white or tan scaly or crusty patches, red bumps, protruding sores or cracks with dried blood. Left untreated, 10 percent or more may turn into squamous cell carcinomas, so treatment by a dermatologist is recommended.

Melanoma

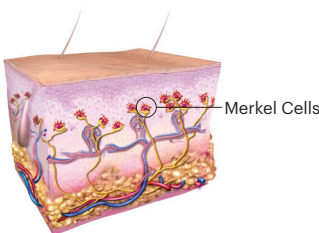
Melanoma is a cancer that develops from melanocytes, the skin cells that produce melanin pigment, which gives skin its color. The **more dangerous** of the three most common forms of skin cancer, melanoma is often triggered by the kind of intense, intermittent sun exposure that leads to sunburn. Tanning bed use also increases risk for melanoma. Melanomas often resemble moles and sometimes may arise from them. The disease has a very high chance of being cured if found and removed early. About 235,000 cases of melanoma are estimated to be diagnosed in the U.S. in 2026, about 112,000 of them invasive. When melanoma progresses, it can spread to vital organs, and it causes more than 8,500 deaths in the U.S. each year.

The ABCDEs of Melanoma



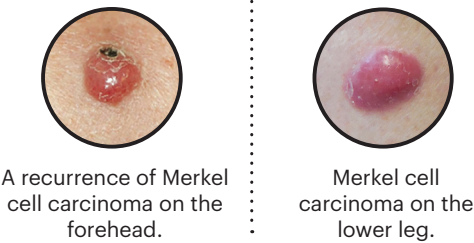
Merkel Cell Carcinoma

Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) is a **rare, aggressive cancer** that starts in the outer layer of skin and looks like Merkel cells; however, it is unlikely it originates from those specific cells. It has a high risk of recurring and spreading (metastasizing), often within two to three years after diagnosis. There are about 3,200 new cases of MCC in the U.S. each year, and they are rarely found at an early stage. However, immunotherapy drugs are improving survival. About 80 percent are associated with a virus called the Merkel cell polyomavirus; 20 percent are caused by UV radiation. These tumors often appear on sun-exposed areas of the body as a pearly, pimple-like lump, sometimes skin-colored, red, purple or bluish-red, and are rarely tender to the touch. They can advance rapidly, which is often what causes patients and doctors to take notice. It is important to take a diagnosis seriously and act quickly to find multidisciplinary care to form a treatment plan.



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Merkel Cell Carcinomas



More Resources for You



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