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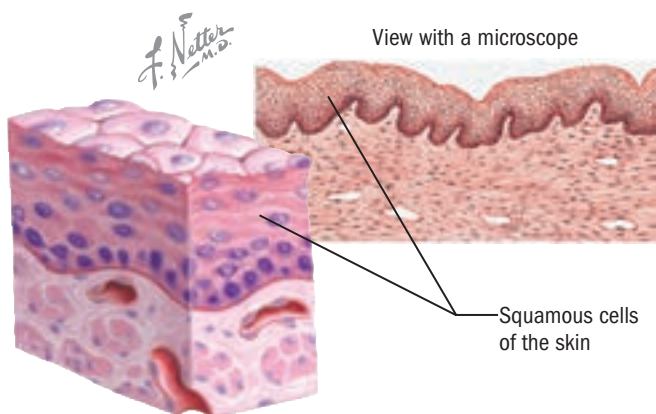
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Patient Education:

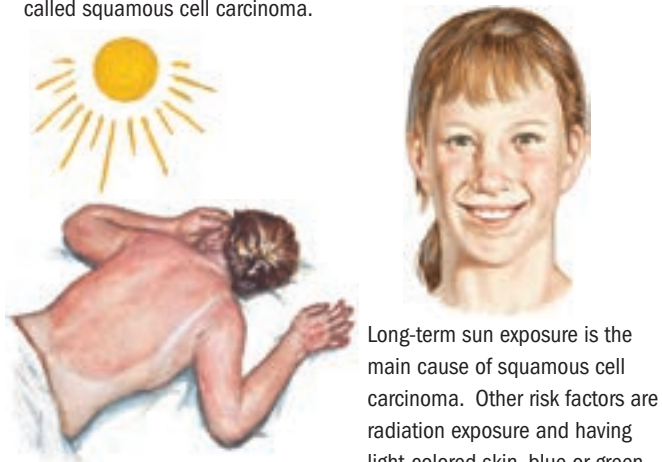
MANAGING YOUR SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA

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MANAGING YOUR SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA

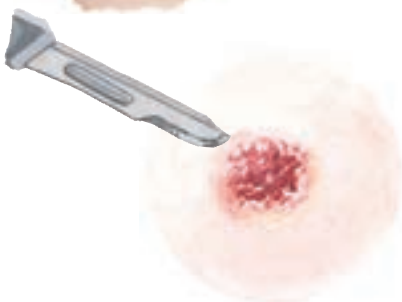
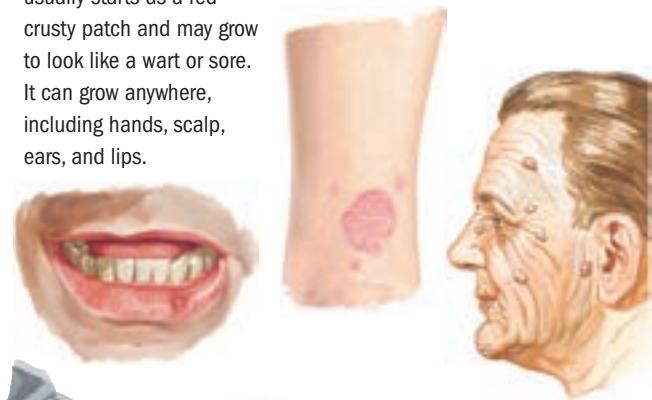


Squamous cells are in the part of the skin called the epidermis. These cells, near the skin surface, are often exposed to UV sunlight. They can become abnormal and grow into a common skin cancer called squamous cell carcinoma.



Long-term sun exposure is the main cause of squamous cell carcinoma. Other risk factors are radiation exposure and having light-colored skin, blue or green eyes, and blond or red hair.

Squamous cell carcinoma usually starts as a red crusty patch and may grow to look like a wart or sore. It can grow anywhere, including hands, scalp, ears, and lips.



Your health care provider will examine your skin, but a biopsy is needed for diagnosis. For a biopsy, a tiny piece of skin is shaved off and sent to a laboratory for study.

What Is Squamous Cell Carcinoma?

Squamous cells form the part of the skin called the epidermis. Cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma is a common kind of skin cancer that involves these cells. It occurs most often in people older than age 50.

What Causes Squamous Cell Carcinoma?

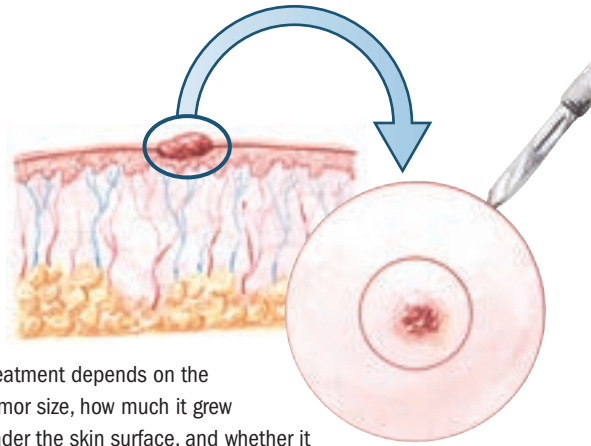
The cause is usually longtime sun exposure. Exposure to many x-rays and having light-colored skin, blue or green eyes, and blond or red hair can also give people greater risks of having this cancer. It's rarely found in dark-skinned persons.

What Are the Symptoms of Squamous Cell Carcinoma?

This cancer usually starts as a reddish skin patch with a crusty surface or a bump. It may grow and look like a wart or sore. It can grow anywhere, including hands, scalp, ears, and lips. It can form a sore that bleeds on and off. A sore that doesn't heal may mean squamous cell carcinoma.

How Is Squamous Cell Carcinoma Diagnosed?

The health care provider will examine the skin, but a skin biopsy is needed for diagnosis. For a biopsy, a tiny piece of skin is shaved off and sent to a laboratory for study. A dermatologist (specialist in skin diseases) may do this.



Treatment depends on the tumor size, how much it grew under the skin surface, and whether it spread to other organs. Most tumors can be scraped off or be burned or frozen. Healing can take 6 weeks.



Wear protective clothing and sunscreens with high SPF values. Use a lot of sunscreen. Don't forget your face, backs of your hands, and ears. Avoid too much sun, especially the strongest midday sun—10 AM to 2 PM.

Watch for changes in the look, color, size, or texture of a lesion on your skin. Call your health care provider if you see these changes.



Don't smoke. Cigarette, cigar, and pipe smoking can cause squamous cell carcinoma of the lips and mouth.



How Is Squamous Cell Carcinoma Treated?

Squamous cell carcinoma can most often be cured by taking off the cancer. The way to do this depends on the size of the tumor growing below the skin surface.

Small tumors can be burned with an electric needle and scraped out. Some can be removed by freezing. These procedures are usually done in the doctor's office.

Larger tumors need to be cut out. The health care provider may use a special type of surgery called Mohs micrographic surgery. This operation involves slowly removing layers of skin until the whole cancer is gone. The wound may take up to 6 weeks to heal. The health care provider must be told about any signs of infection during this time.

Rarely, the tumor spreads. If it has spread to other areas, a health care provider specializing in treating cancer can treat this tumor with radiation or cancer drugs.

Squamous cell carcinoma can come back, so regular follow-up appointments are a must to find new squamous cell carcinomas early.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Squamous Cell Carcinoma:

- ✓ **DO** avoid too much sun, especially the strongest sun during the middle of the day (between 10 AM and 2 PM).
- ✓ **DO** wear sunscreens with high sun protection factors and protective clothing when you're in the sun.
- ✓ **DO** use a lot of sunscreen. Don't forget your face, the backs of your hands, and your ears.
- ✓ **DO** stay out of tanning parlors.
- ✓ **DO** watch for changes in the look, color, size, or texture of a lesion on your skin. Call your health care provider if you see these changes. Also call if you have pain, inflammation, bleeding, or itching of a skin lesion.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if you see new growth in the area of the skin where the cancer was removed.
- ⊗ **DON'T** smoke. Cigarette, cigar, and pipe smoking can cause squamous cell carcinoma of the lips and mouth.
- ⊗ **DON'T** miss follow-up health care provider appointments for early detection of possible cancers.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

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