
BASAL CELL CARCINOMA

Basal Cell Carcinoma is the most common form of skin cancer worldwide. In the majority of cases, it is thought to be caused by exposure to the harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun. Basal cell carcinoma is becoming more common, perhaps because people may be spending more time outdoors and the decrease in the ozone layer may be allowing more UV radiation from the sun to reach the earth's surface. Basal cell carcinoma does not usually metastasize or spread in the bloodstream to other organs; rather, it infiltrates the surrounding area destroying tissue. For this reason, basal cell carcinomas should be treated promptly by a dermatologist.

Basal cell carcinomas appear most often on sun-exposed areas such as the face, scalp, ears, chest, back, and legs. These tumors can have several different forms. The most common appearance of basal cell carcinoma is a small, dome-shaped pimple-like growth that has a pearly color. Blood vessels may be seen on the surface. A basal cell carcinoma can also appear as a sore that seems to heal but recurs repeatedly. Superficial basal cell carcinomas, a very early form, may appear as shiny, pinkish patches on the skin. A less common form, morpheaform, looks like a smooth white or yellowish waxy scar.

Basal cell carcinomas usually do not metastasize; however, they do not spontaneously go away. This is a cancer which will continue to grow locally, bleed, and destroy tissue unless treated. If the skin cancer is located near organs such as the eyes, ears, and nose, or is growing near a nerve, serious problems can arise; therefore, it should be treated promptly. Any lesion or sore that does not heal should be evaluated by a dermatologist who will examine it and decide whether to perform a biopsy. A biopsy is a simple procedure done in the office under local anesthesia to obtain a small amount of tissue for a microscopic examination. In some cases, the dermatologist may choose to perform the biopsy and treat the skin cancer at the same time. The dermatologist will discuss the various surgical and non-surgical options available.

- Because basal cell carcinoma is frequently caused by UV radiation from the sun, proper sun protection may help in prevention. Sun protection in children is especially important.
- Seek shade when appropriate, remembering that the ultraviolet rays are the most intense between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Wear light-colored, tightly woven, protective clothing like long sleeves and pants, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against both UVA and UVB rays with a SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 30.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours when in the sun and even on cloudy days.

Information obtained from American Academy of Dermatology

Disclaimer:

*All information contained in this site is general in nature.
For a specified diagnosis or treatment, please call our office, 724-837-5810.*