

basal cell carcinoma



How can we protect ourselves?



What are the treatment options?

BASAL CELL CARCINOMA is a major type of skin cancer. It occurs most frequently on sun-exposed regions of the body. Although this skin cancer rarely spreads to other organs of the body (i.e., metastasizes), it can cause destruction of surrounding tissue. Thus early detection and treatment are needed.

Most basal cell carcinomas are caused by chronic sun exposure, especially in people with fair skin, light hair, and blue, green or grey eyes. In a few instances, there are other contributing factors such as burns, exposure to radiation, arsenical intoxication, and stasis dermatitis of the legs.

Basal cell carcinoma may have several different appearances on your skin. Some warning signs that may indicate basal cell carcinoma are an open sore, a reddish patch, a growth with an elevated border and a central indentation, a bump or nodule, and a scar-like area.

BECAUSE CHRONIC OVEREXPOSURE to sunlight is the leading cause of basal cell carcinoma, sun avoidance (especially during peak sunlight hours) is an effective preventative measure to help reduce the risk of developing this skin cancer. Limit skin exposure to the sun's harmful ultraviolet (invisible) rays by wearing sunglasses, broad-brimmed hats, and protective, tightly woven clothing.

Furthermore, use a broad-spectrum sunscreen rated SPF-15 or higher on all exposed skin, including the lips, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunscreen frequently. Additionally, stay away from tanning parlors and artificial tanning devices.

Inspect your entire body regularly for any skin changes, especially those already mentioned, and routinely visit your dermatologist for a skin examination.

AFTER BEING EXAMINED by your dermatologist, a diagnosis of basal cell carcinoma is confirmed with a biopsy. This procedure consists of removing a portion of tissue, which is then examined by a dermatopathologist under a microscope. If cancer is confirmed, treatment is required. Several effective methods are available to treat this tumor. Your physician's choice of therapy depends on the size, location, and subtype of basal cell carcinoma encountered. The patient's age and general health are also taken into consideration. Some of the treatments are: excisional surgery, electrosurgery, radiation therapy, and Mohs' surgery (microscopically controlled surgery). Your dermatologist will discuss these treatment options with you.

Don't become a statistic.

NOT ONLY IS basal cell carcinoma the most common form of skin cancer, it is the most common of all cancers, affecting nearly one million Americans each year. Men are affected more often than women. Basal cell carcinomas generally tend to occur in older individuals, although they may occur in young adults and even children. People with one basal cell carcinoma have a greater chance of developing others, thus emphasizing the importance of regular follow-up visits to a dermatologist.



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Brochures and additional information

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Other references

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New York: Churchill Livingstone 1997; 647-651

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While clinical pathology involves an interpretation of standardized laboratory results, anatomic pathology typically requires the involvement of a pathologist in the examination of tissues and microscopic cellular evaluation. Although our expert board-certified pathologists do not treat patients directly, they assist your attending physician by establishing definitive diagnoses and providing effective consultations regarding effective treatment plans.

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