



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Learning About Squamous Cell Skin Cancer

Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Squamous cell skin cancer (carcinoma) is a common type of skin cancer. It most often appears on the head, face, or neck.

This cancer is almost always cured when it is found early and treated. If not treated, it may grow and spread (metastasize).



NCI Visuals Online. Skin Cancer Foundation. visualsonline.cancer.gov

This skin cancer is usually caused by too much sun. Using tanning beds or sunlamps can also cause it.

What are the symptoms?

Signs of squamous cell carcinoma include:

- Any firm, red bump on sun-exposed skin, and the bump does not go away.
- Any patch of skin that feels scaly, bleeds, or develops a crust. The patch may get bigger over a period of months and form a sore.
- Any skin growth that looks like a wart.
- Any sore that does not heal.
- Any area of thickened skin on the lower lip. This is more likely if you smoke or use chewing tobacco, or your lips are often exposed to the sun and wind.

How is it treated?

Your doctor will want to remove all of the cancer. There are several ways to remove it. It depends on how big it is, where it is on your body, and your age and overall health. Treatment options include:

- Surgery to cut out the cancer.
- Mohs micrographic surgery. This surgery removes the skin cancer one layer at a time, checking each layer for cancer cells right after it is removed.
- Curettage and electrocauterization. Curettage uses a spoon-shaped instrument (curette) to scrape off the skin cancer, and electrocauterization controls the bleeding and destroys any remaining cancer cells.
- Cryosurgery. Cryosurgery destroys the skin cancer by freezing it with liquid nitrogen.
- Radiation therapy. Radiation therapy uses X-rays or other types of radiation to kill cancer cells. It may be done if surgery isn't an option.

Other treatment options include chemotherapy cream and laser surgery.

If your doctor removes the cancer, he or she will send it to a lab. The lab will make sure all the cancer was removed. If cancer is still there, you will need more treatment.

How can you prevent it?

- Always wear a wide-brimmed hat and long sleeves and pants if you are going to be outdoors.
- Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., which is the peak time for UV rays.
- Always wear sunscreen on exposed skin. Make sure to use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Use it every day, even when it is cloudy.
- Do not use tanning booths or sunlamps.
- Use lip balm or cream that has sun protection factor (SPF) to protect your lips from getting sunburned.
- Wear sunglasses that block UV rays.
- Don't smoke or use tobacco products. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

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- You see a change in your skin, such as a growth or mole that:
 - Grows bigger. This may happen slowly.
 - Changes color.
 - Changes shape.
 - Starts to bleed easily.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter **U290** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Squamous Cell Skin Cancer.**"

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