

What is basal cell carcinoma?

Basal cell carcinoma, (BCC) also known as a rodent ulcer is the most common form of skin cancer. It grows very slowly and never spreads to other areas of the body. If left untreated, BCCs can disfigure, especially on the face. Early recognition and treatment are important.

What causes BCC?

The most significant risk factor in the development of basal cell carcinoma is long-term exposure to sunlight and episodes of burning in the sun. The risk increases if you have a tendency to freckle and have fair skin. BCCs usually occur on exposed skin i.e.; hands, face, ears, scalp, lips, shoulders and back.

Treatment for BCC

Minor surgery is used to remove a BCC in the majority of cases. This is usually carried out using a local anaesthetic. Treatment options depend on the size, site and number of BCCs present.

Following removal, the tissue is sent away to be examined under the microscope. It may take up to two weeks for the biopsy results to be ready.

The complete removal of the lesion for diagnosis will indicate that no further treatment is required. Occasionally it will be necessary to take more skin to ensure no cancer cells have been left behind.

It may be necessary to repair biopsy areas with a skin graft or other types of plastic surgery.

The Future

Following surgery, if all of the cancer has been removed, you will not require any other treatment.

However if you have had one BCC it is likely that others will develop over the years.

Therefore it is important that you examine your skin regularly, looking for early warning signs.

- Check for any new or existing skin lumps or moles that enlarge change colour, bleed or itch. Most changes are harmless but they could indicate the start of a skin cancer. See your doctor if in doubt.

Remember:
Basal Cell Carcinoma is curable.

Recognise the warning signs.

Taking Care in the Sun

- Stay in the shade between the hours of 11am and 3pm.
- Make sure you never burn.
- Avoid sun beds.
- Always cover up. Wear light cool clothing of a tight weave, wide brimmed hats and U.V. protective sunglasses.
- Take extra care of children, their skin is delicate. Very young babies should be kept out of strong direct sunshine.
- Use a sunscreen of factor 15 and above, according to your skin type, apply it 15-30 minutes before you go outside and reapply it regularly.

Pass the message on to family and friends about protecting themselves from the sun and being aware of changes to moles and their skin.

Other sources of information

- Cancerbackup/Macmillan Cancer Support:
Freephone: 0808 800 1234
www.cancerbacup.org.uk

Torbay and South Devon 
NHS Foundation Trust



**PATIENT
INFORMATION**

Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)

**Skin Cancer Nurse Specialist
Torbay Hospital
Tel: 01803 655278**