



PATIENT INFORMATION

Treating Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Skin

To obtain further information and advice please contact:

Skin Cancer Nurse Specialist.

Torbay Hospital

Tel: 01803 655278

What is Squamous Cell Carcinoma?

You have been diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) of the skin.

This is the second most common form of skin cancer. It is slow growing and usually remains in the outer layer of the skin.

If left untreated SCCs can spread to other organs of the body, although this is rare. SCCs can disfigure the skin, especially on the face. Early recognition and treatment is important.

What causes SCC?

The most significant risk factor in the development of SCC 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.

SCCs occur at sites of maximum sun exposure: on a bald head, lips, cheeks, nose, ears and hands.

Less common causes of SCC include exposure to arsenic, radiation, and chronic scars/wounds.

Treatment for SCC

Minor surgery is used to remove suspected SCCs in the majority of cases.

Other appropriate treatment options depend on the size, site, number and depth of the lesion.

Treatment is usually carried out using a local anaesthetic and you will go home the same day.

Following removal of the tissue it 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 will indicate that no further treatment is required.

Occasionally it will be necessary to take more skin to ensure that no cancer cells have been left behind.

Some biopsy areas will need to be repaired 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.

You may be asked to attend a follow up clinic to check that the condition does not return.

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

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

- Check for any new lumps or moles that enlarge, change colour, bleed or itch and fail to heal.
- Examine the original scar site and surrounding skin, and be aware of any new changes and seek advice.
- Rarely SCCs can spread to lymph glands. Advice can be given on how to examine yourself.

Remember:
**Squamous Cell Carcinoma
is curable**

Recognise the early warning signs.

Taking Care in the Sun

- Stay in the shade between the hours of 11am and 3pm.
- Make sure you never burn.
- Avoid the use of 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 as 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. Ensure the sunscreen has UVB and UVA protection. Apply it 15-30 minutes before you go out and re-apply regularly.

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

Other sources of information:

The Lodge, Cancer support Centre
01803 617521

Macmillan Cancer Support:
0808 808 00 00
www.macmillan.org.uk