

BASAL CELL CARCINOMA

What is it?

Basal cell carcinoma is the most common form of skin cancer. It is named for the basal cells from which it develops, which are located at the base of the outer skin layer (epidermis).

Who gets it and what causes it?

Approximately 1 in 4 Americans will get a basal cell carcinoma in their lifetime. People who have fair skin and light colored hair are at highest risk. Chronic exposure to sunlight is the cause of almost all basal cell carcinomas, which almost always occur on sun exposed portions of the body.

What are the symptoms?

Basal cell carcinoma can look and feel a number of ways:

- 1) a shiny bump or nodule that is pearly, pink, brown or translucent
- 2) an open sore that bleeds, oozes, or crusts and does not heal
- 3) a reddish scaly patch or irritated area.

How is it diagnosed?

Your dermatologist can recognize lesions that may be suspicious for a basal cell carcinoma, and will confirm the diagnosis with a skin biopsy.

What is the treatment?

The vast majority of basal cell carcinomas are curable. Basal cell carcinomas don't metastasize or spread internally. Curettage and electrodesiccation can be performed to treat the skin cancer by scraping and burning it away. Excision and placing stitches in the skin is another option. Mohs micrographic surgery, a highly specialized technique, is the preferred treatment for some basal cell carcinomas.

Self-care tips:

You can protect yourself by having regular skin exams to identify any suspicious-looking lesions before they progress too far. If you must spend time in the sun, make sure you are well protected with a broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least a SPF 30, a broad-rimmed hat, sunglasses and protective clothing.

For more information please visit our website: www.pennstatehershey.org/web/dermatology/home and click on Health Information Library.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your provider at the location you were treated.
Hershey Medical Center, UPC I, Suite 100 (717) 531-6820 or Nyes Road, (717) 657-4045.
Penn State Hershey Medical Group, Colonnade Building (814)272-4445.