



# Peter Callan Plastic Surgeon

Peter Callan Plastic Surgeon specialising in Cosmetic Surgery, Breast Surgery, Hand Surgery and Treatment of Skin

## Basal cell carcinoma (Basal cell cancer)

Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is so called because it develops in the layer of skin called the basal layer where new cells are constantly being formed. Seventy-five per cent of all skin cancers in Australia are of this type. Fortunately it doesn't spread to other parts of the body although it does have a propensity to invade into the surrounding skin and anything else close by. Sun exposure definitely causes most BCCs, but there are other factors which are important. Some people have a genetic predisposition to develop this type of skin cancer.

There are various types of BCC and treatment depends on the type of BCC and where it is. The methods available include curettage, excision, freezing, creams, radiotherapy and light treatment. Apart from the treatments mentioned there are other options utilised for special cases. Mohs micrographic surgery is a technique to remove difficult or large tumours, particularly around the nose and eyes.

In some cases it is difficult to diagnose a BCC from its outward appearance and a diagnostic biopsy may be needed. This means removing a small piece of the tumour for examination under the microscope.

In summary BCCs are the most common type of skin cancer, which means they are the most common type of any cancer. Different types of BCC have different appearances and different patterns of growth. Since BCCs rarely spread (metastasise) throughout the body, the main problem with them is that if they are not removed early they can spread locally, ultimately requiring extensive disfiguring surgery. It is important to recognise them before they get to this stage. A skin spot which bleeds may be a BCC.