



Squamous cell carcinoma (Squamous cell cancer)

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) of the skin is so called because it develops from the squamous cells which make up the bulk of the skin surface. They are less common than Basal cell carcinomas. They occur in sun-exposed sites such as the face, hands, arms and lower lip. Sometimes they develop in solar keratoses (sun spots). People whose immune system is suppressed, for example people with kidney transplants or anyone taking immuno-suppressive drugs, have a higher risk of SCC. Such people are at a much higher risk of skin cancer and must be particularly careful to avoid the sun.

SCCs vary in appearance. There are various types of SCC 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 SCC 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.

For SCCs, the risk of spread throughout the body is low, but is more likely to occur for those on the lower lip and ear. Thus these SCCs should be treated as soon as possible.