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PLASTIC SURGEON

# Squamous Cell Carcinoma

## (Squamous cell cancer)

### What is it?

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is so called because it develops from the squamous cells which make up the bulk of the skin surface. It is less common than basal cell carcinoma (BCC). SCCs occur in sun-exposed sites such as the face, hands and arms. 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.

There are different types of SCC and treatment depends on the type and where it is. The methods available include curettage, excision, freezing, creams, radiotherapy and light treatment. There are other options utilised for special cases. Mohs micrographic surgery, for example, is a technique for removing difficult or large tumours, particularly around the nose and eyes.

SCCs vary in appearance. In some cases it is difficult to diagnose a SCC from its outward appearance and a biopsy may be needed. This means removing a small piece of the tumour for examination under the microscope in a pathology lab.

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. These SCCs should be treated as soon as possible.