

Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer: Symptoms



What are the symptoms of nonmelanoma skin cancer?

Nonmelanoma skin cancer may appear as a new growth. Or it may start as a change in the size or in the color of a growth you already have. These changes can happen slowly or quickly. Here are things to watch for.

Basal cell carcinoma

This type of skin cancer often develops on skin exposed to the sun. This includes skin on the head, face, neck, arms, and hands. The cancer may be:

- A small, raised bump that's pink, red, shiny, or pearly. There may be black, brown, or blue areas in it.
- A pink raised growth with a lower center. It may have small blood vessels in it.
- A firm, flat, spot that looks a lot like a scar. It may look waxy or have pale or yellow areas in it.
- An open sore that bleeds easily and briefly. It might heal up and seem to go away, but then bleeds again in a few weeks.
- Bleeding, oozing, or crusting sores that don't heal
- A reddish growth with raised edges that might itch

Squamous cell carcinoma

Like basal cell cancer, it often starts in skin exposed to the sun. This includes skin on the face, head, ear, lips, neck, and hands. But it can also start in other parts of the body, like in scars or the skin in the genital area. The cancer may be:

- A rough or scaly bump that appears, then grows quickly
- A wart-like growth that might bleed or crust over
- Flat, rough, red patches on the skin that are irregularly shaped. They may or may not bleed and crust.
- An open sore that doesn't heal or heals and then comes back

Merkel cell carcinoma

Merkel cell cancer tumors are most often found on sun-exposed areas of skin, such as the face, neck, and arms. But they can start anywhere on the body. They can look like:

- A firm, shiny skin lump that doesn't hurt and grows very quickly
- The lump may be red, pink, purple, or blue.

Cutaneous (skin) lymphoma

Skin lymphoma may be:

- A scaly, flat patch of skin

- Small, raised spots that look a lot like pimples
- Thick lowered or raised areas of skin
- Patches or bumps that are often red or purple and tend to itch
- Bumps or lumps that can be felt under the skin

When to see your healthcare provider

Many of these symptoms may be caused by other health problems. But it's important to see a healthcare provider as soon as possible if you have any new, changing, or growing spots or lumps on your skin. Only a healthcare provider can tell if you have cancer.

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