**Basal Cell Carcinoma**

It is often recognized as a scab that bleeds occasionally and does not heal completely. Some basal cell carcinomas are very superficial and look like a scaly red flat mark Pearl-like rim surrounding a central crater.Other basal cell carcinomas are quite lumpy, with one or more shiny nodules crossed by small but easily seen blood vessels.

Basal cell carcinomas can be cured in almost every case, although treatment becomes complicated if they have been neglected for a very long time, or if they are in an awkward place - such as near the eye, nose or ear. Seldom, if ever, do they spread to other parts of the body. 

**What is a basal cell carcinoma?**

A basal cell carcinoma is a type of skin cancer - the most common one in the .  It is sometimes also called a ‘rodent ulcer’.

**What causes basal cell carcinoma?**

The commonest cause is too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun or from sun beds.  Basal cell carcinomas can occur anywhere on your body, but are most common on areas that are exposed to the sun, such as your face, head, neck and ears.  It is also possible for a basal cell carcinoma to develop where burns, scars or ulcers have damaged the skin.  Basal cell carcinomas are not infectious.

Basal cell carcinomas mainly affect fair skinned adults and are more common in men than women. Those with the highest risk of developing a basal cell carcinoma are:

People with freckles or with pale skin and blond or red hair.   
Those who have had a lot of exposure to the sun, such as people with outdoor hobbies or who work out of doors, and people who have lived in sunny climates.   
People who use sun beds.   
People who have previously had a basal cell carcinoma.   
Are basal cell carcinomas hereditary?

Apart from a rare familial condition called Gorlin’s syndrome, basal cell carcinomas are not hereditary. However some of the things that increase the risk of getting one (e.g. a fair skin, a tendency to burn rather than tan, and freckling) do run in families.

**What are the symptoms of basal cell carcinomas?**

Most basal cell carcinomas are painless. People often first become aware of them as a scab that bleeds occasionally and does not heal completely. Some basal cell carcinomas are very superficial and look like a scaly red flat mark: others have a pearl-like rim surrounding a central crater. If left for years, the latter type can eventually erode the skin causing an ulcer – hence the name “rodent ulcer”. Other basal cell carcinomas are quite lumpy, with one or more shiny nodules crossed by small but easily seen blood vessels.

**How will my basal cell carcinoma be diagnosed?**

Sometimes the diagnosis is clear from its appearance. If further investigation is necessary a small area of the abnormal skin (a biopsy) or all of the lesion (an excision biopsy) may be cut out and examined under the microscope.  You will be given a local anaesthetic beforehand to numb the skin.

Can basal cell carcinomas be cured?

Yes, basal cell carcinomas can be cured in almost every case, although treatment becomes complicated if they have been neglected for a very long time, or if they are in an awkward place - such as near the eye, nose or ear. Seldom, if ever, do they spread to other parts of the body. 

For information about available treatments for Basal Cell Carcinoma please go to [this page](http://www.bad.org.uk/site/800/default.aspx)on the website of the British Assocaition of Dermatologists





