**Bowen's Disease**

**What is Bowen’s disease?**

Bowen’s disease is also known as intraepidermal squamous cell carcinoma, and is a growth of cancerous cells that is confined to the outer layer of the skin. It is not a serious condition, and its importance rests on the fact that, occasionally, it can progress into an invasive skin cancer (squamous cell carcinoma). For this reason, dermatologists usually treat, or at least keep an eye on, Bowen's disease.

**What causes Bowen’s disease?**

Most cases of Bowen’s disease develop as a result of long-term sun exposure. Very occasionally, Bowen’s disease may be seen in the context of previous radiotherapy, following chronic arsenic ingestion (very rare nowadays) or on the genitalia in association with the virus that causes warts (the human papillomavirus). Bowen's disease is neither infectious, nor due to an allergy.

**Is it hereditary?**

No, it is not; but some of the factors that increase the risk of getting it, such as a fair skin and a tendency to burn in the sun, do run in families.

**What are its symptoms?**

Often there are no symptoms, although the surface crusting may catch on clothing.

**What does it look like?**

A patch of Bowen’s disease starts as a small red scaly area, which grows very slowly. It may reach a diameter of a few centimetres across. It commonly occurs on sun-exposed skin, especially the head, hands and lower legs. More than one lesion may be present. The development of an ulcer or lump on a patch of Bowen’s disease may indicate the formation of invasive squamous cell carcinoma.

**How will it be diagnosed?**

A patch of Bowen’s disease can look rather like other skin conditions, such as psoriasis. For this reason a biopsy may be needed to make the diagnosis.

Can it be cured?

Yes. As Bowen’s disease is confined to the surface of the skin, there are a variety of ways in which this can be achieved.

For available treatments please visit [this page](http://www.bad.org.uk/site/802/default.aspx)on the website of the Briitsh Association of Dermatologists











