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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/skincancer.html>

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. The two most common types are basal cell cancer and squamous cell cancer. They usually form on the head, face, neck, hands, and arms. Another type of skin cancer, **melanoma** [<https://medlineplus.gov/melanoma.html>] , is more dangerous but less common.


Anyone can get skin cancer, but it is more common in people who :

- Spend a lot of time in the sun [<https://medlineplus.gov/sunexposure.html>] or have been sunburned
- Have light-colored skin, hair and eyes
- Have a family member with skin cancer
- Are over age 50





You should have your doctor check any suspicious skin markings and any changes in the way your skin looks. Treatment is more likely to work well when cancer is found early. If not treated, some types of skin cancer cells can spread to other tissues and organs. Treatments include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, photodynamic therapy (PDT), and biologic therapy. PDT uses a drug and a type of laser light to kill cancer cells. Biologic therapy boosts your body's own ability to fight cancer.

NIH: National Cancer Institute

Start Here


- General Information about Skin Cancer [https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-treatment-pdq#_1]
 (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-piel-pdq>]
- Skin Cancer [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/skin-cancer/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/cancer-de-piel-es/?adfree=true>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Skin Biopsy [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/skin-biopsy/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Skin Cancer Screening [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/skin-cancer-screening/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/examen-de-cancer-de-piel/>]
- Skin Cancer Screening [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-screening-pdq>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/deteccion-piel-pdq>]
- Stages of Merkel Cell Carcinoma [https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/merkel-cell-treatment-pdq#_26]
 (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-celulas-de-merkel-pdq#_22]
- Stages of Skin Cancer [https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-treatment-pdq#_29]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-piel-pdq#_29]
- Tests for Basal and Squamous Cell Skin Cancers [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/basal-and-squamous-cell-skin-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html>] (American Cancer Society)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-piel-de-celulas-basales-y-escamosas/deteccion-diagnostico-clasificacion-por-etapas/como-se-diagnostica.html>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Reducing Risk for Skin Cancer [<https://www.cdc.gov/skin-cancer/prevention/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/skin-cancer/es/prevention/>]
- Skin Cancer Prevention [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-prevention-pdq>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/prevencion-piel-pdq#section/all>]
- Take Steps to Prevent Skin Cancer [<https://odphp.health.gov/myhealthfinder/health-conditions/cancer/take-steps-prevent-skin-cancer>] **Easy-to-Read** (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion)
Also in Spanish [<https://odphp.health.gov/espanol/myhealthfinder/problemas-salud/cancer/tome-medidas-prevenir-cancer-piel>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Cryosurgery to Treat Cancer [<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/types/surgery/cryosurgery>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/cancer/tratamiento/tipos/cirugia/criterapia>]
- Drugs Approved for Skin Cancer [<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/drugs/skin>]  (National Cancer Institute)
- Electrodesiccation [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/electrodesiccation/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Mohs Micrographic Surgery [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/mohs-micrographic-surgery/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Skin Cancer: Treatment Types [<https://www.rtanswers.org/cancer-types/skin-cancer/treatment-types>]
(American Society for Radiation Oncology)
- Treatment of Actinic Keratosis [https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-treatment-pdq#_100]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-piel-pdq#_100]
- Treatment Option Overview (Merkel Cell Carcinoma) [https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/merkel-cell-treatment-pdq#_50]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-celulas-de-merkel-pdq#_46]
- Treatment Option Overview (Skin Cancer) [https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-treatment-pdq#_59]  (National Cancer Institute)


Living With

- Living as a Basal or Squamous Cell Skin Cancer Survivor [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/basal-and-squamous-cell-skin-cancer/after-treatment/follow-up.html>] (American Cancer Society)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-piel-de-celulas-basales-y-escamosas/despues-del-tratamiento/cuidado-de-seguimiento.html>]





Related Issues

- Actinic Cheilitis [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/actinic-cheilitis/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Actinic Keratosis (Solar Keratosis) [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/actinic-keratosis-solar-keratosis/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Risks of Skin Cancer Screening [https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-screening-pdq#_32]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/deteccion-piel-pdq#section/_32]
- Skin Cancer in People with Darker Skin [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/skin-cancer-in-black-or-brown-skin>]  (National Cancer Institute) - **PDF**
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/cualquiera-padecer-cancer-piel>]
- Sunscreen: How to Help Protect Your Skin from the Sun [<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/understanding-over-counter-medicines/sunscreen-how-help-protect-your-skin-sun>] (Food and Drug Administration)

Specifics

- General Information about Merkel Cell Carcinoma [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/merkel-cell-treatment-pdq>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-celulas-de-merkel-pdq>]
- Sebaceous Carcinoma: Overview [<https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/skin-cancer/types/common/sebaceous?NoAds>] (American Academy of Dermatology)


Genetics

- 9q22.3 microdeletion: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/9q223-microdeletion>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Gorlin syndrome: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/gorlin-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Learning about Skin Cancer [<https://www.genome.gov/Genetic-Disorders/Skin-Cancer>]  (National Human Genome Research Institute)
- Xeroderma pigmentosum: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/xeroderma-pigmentosum>]  (National Library of Medicine)





Images

- Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/squamous-cell-carcinoma-scc/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)

Statistics and Research

- Advances in Melanoma and Other Skin Cancers Research [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/research>]  (National Cancer Institute)
- For Some Skin Cancers, Targeted Drug Hits the Mark [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/research/vismodegib-basal-cell>]  (National Cancer Institute)
- Melanoma of the Skin Statistics [<https://www.cdc.gov/skin-cancer/statistics/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/skin-cancer/es/statistics/index.html>]
- Skin Cancer [<https://www.aad.org/media/stats-skin-cancer?NoAds>] (American Academy of Dermatology)
- What's New in Basal and Squamous Cell Skin Cancer Research? [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/basal-and-squamous-cell-skin-cancer/about/new-research.html>] (American Cancer Society)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-piel-de-celulas-basales-y-escamosas/acerca/nuevas-investigaciones.html>]

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Carcinoma, Basal Cell [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Carcinoma,+Basal+Cell%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Carcinoma, Merkel Cell [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Carcinoma,+Merkel+Cell%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Keratosis, Actinic [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Keratosis,+Actinic%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Skin Neoplasms [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Skin+Neoplasms%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles



References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Pretreatment and on-treatment ctDNA and tissue biomarkers predict recurrence in patients...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40645660>]
- Article: Nivolumab plus relatlimab in advanced melanoma: RELATIVITY-047 4-year update.
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40513285>]
- Article: POLARIS: encorafenib plus binimetinib for people with BRAF V600-mutant melanoma with...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40503961>]
- Skin Cancer -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Skin+Neoplasms%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]



Reference Desk

- Dictionary of Cancer Terms [<https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/publicaciones/diccionarios/diccionario-cancer/>]

Find an Expert

- American Academy of Dermatology [<https://www.aad.org/?NoAds>]
- American Cancer Society [<https://www.cancer.org/>]
- Choosing a Cancer Doctor [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/finding-care/where-to-find-cancer-care/choosing-a-cancer-doctor.html>] (American Cancer Society)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/como-sobrellevar-el-cancer/encontrar-tratamiento/como-elegir-un-medico-y-un-hospital/como-seleccionar-a-un-medico.html>]
- Find a Dermatologic Surgeon [<https://www.asds.net/find-a-dermatologic-surgeon/advanced/true>]
(American Society for Dermatologic Surgery)
- Find a Dermatologist [<https://find-a-derm.aad.org/>] (American Academy of Dermatology)
- National Cancer Institute [<https://www.cancer.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/>]
- Organizations that Offer Cancer Support Services [<https://supportorgs.cancer.gov/home.aspx>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://supportorgs.cancer.gov/home.aspx?lang=2>]

Children

- Childhood Basal Cell Carcinoma and Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Skin Treatment [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/child-skin-treatment-pdq>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-piel-infantil-pdq>]
- Childhood Melanoma Treatment [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/child-melanoma-treatment-pdq>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/piel/paciente/tratamiento-melanoma-infantil-pdq>]

Patient Handouts

- Basal cell skin cancer [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000824.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000824.htm>]
- Mohs micrographic surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007634.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007634.htm>]
- Skin lesion biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003840.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003840.htm>]
- Skin self-exam [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000711.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000711.htm>]

- Squamous cell skin cancer [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000829.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000829.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Actinic keratosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000827.htm>]

Basal cell skin cancer [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000824.htm>]

Mohs micrographic surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007634.htm>]

Nevoid basal cell carcinoma syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001452.htm>]

Skin lesion biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003840.htm>]

Skin self-exam [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000711.htm>]

Squamous cell skin cancer [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000829.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Melanoma [<https://medlineplus.gov/melanoma.html>]

Skin Conditions [<https://medlineplus.gov/skinconditions.html>]

Sun Exposure [<https://medlineplus.gov/sunexposure.html>]

Tanning [<https://medlineplus.gov/tanning.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Skin Cancer* is the National Cancer Institute [<http://www.cancer.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/skincancer.html>] on *Skin Cancer*

NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

Skin Cancer Diagnosis Highlights Importance of Annual Checks [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/skin-cancer-diagnosis-highlights-importance-of-annual-checks>]

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