

ACTINIC KERATOSIS

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PATIENT INFORMATION

ACTINIC KERATOSIS (AK), also known as solar keratosis, is a precancerous lesion of the epidermis (outer layer of skin) that is caused by long-term exposure to sunlight. Chronic sunlight exposure alters the keratinocytes (cells that make up the majority of the epidermis) and causes areas of your skin to become scaly, rough, discolored and sometimes tender to the touch. AKs are most commonly found on sun-exposed areas such as the face, lips, ears, neck, scalp, forearms and backs of hands. People who have fair skin and light-colored hair and eyes are at the greatest risk of developing AKs. Individuals who are immunosuppressed, either by cancer chemotherapy treatments or organ transplants, and who have an immunodeficiency disorder, are also considered high risk for developing AKs.

AKs are not life threatening as long as they are diagnosed and treated in the early stages. If left untreated, aggressive AKs have the potential to progress into squamous cell carcinoma, a serious type of skin cancer. Therefore, it is important to report any suspicious skin lesions to your physician.

▶ HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF?

Because chronic overexposure to sunlight is the leading cause of actinic keratosis, sun avoidance, especially during peak sunlight hours of 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., is an important preventive measure to help reduce the risk of developing this precancerous lesion.

Limit skin exposure to the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays by wearing broad-brimmed hats and protective, tightly woven clothing. Furthermore, use a broad-spectrum sunscreen, rated SPF-15 or higher, on all exposed skin, including the lips, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunscreen frequently. Additionally, avoid tanning salons and artificial tanning devices.

Inspect your entire body regularly for any skin changes, especially those already mentioned, and **routinely visit your physician for a skin examination.**

▶ TREATMENT OPTIONS

Physicians often diagnose and treat AKs based on clinical appearance alone, but sometimes a skin biopsy is needed. After a dermatopathologist assesses your skin tissue under a microscope and determines the lesion is an AK, your physician will discuss several treatment options with you. Your treatment may vary based on the location, size of the lesion and the amount of AKs you have developed. Your age and general health will also be taken into consideration. Common treatment options are cryosurgery (freezing lesion with liquid nitrogen), topical chemotherapy creams, photodynamic therapy, chemical peels and laser resurfacing therapy. Your physician will help you decide which option is best for you.

DON'T BECOME A STATISTIC

One in six people will develop an AK in their lifetime. Since cumulative sun exposure increases with age, older people are more likely to develop AKs. Patients with multiple AKs have a lifetime risk of progression to squamous cell carcinoma of up to 10%.

Source 2009 American Cancer Society



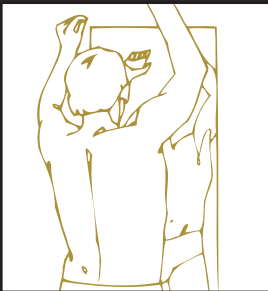
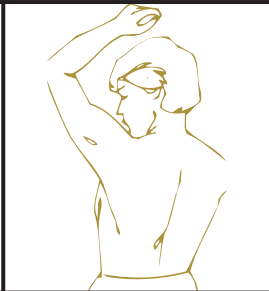

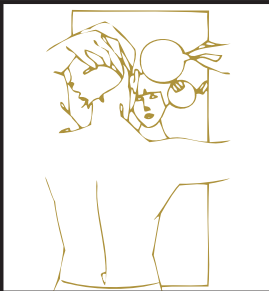
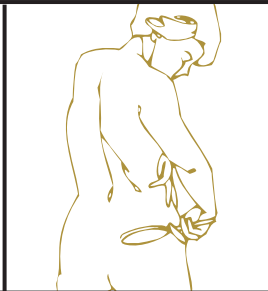
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PERIODIC SELF-EXAMINATION

Aids in the recognition of any new or evolving lesions.
Consult your physician if changes are noticed.

				
STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
Examine your body front and back in the mirror, then right and left sides, arms raised.	Bend elbows and look carefully at forearms and upper arms and palms.	Look at the backs of legs and feet, spaces between toes and soles.	Examine back of neck and scalp with a hand mirror. Part hair for a closer look at scalp.	Finally, check back and buttocks with a hand mirror.

Images and content provided by the American Academy of Dermatology

DO YOU WANT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ACTINIC KERATOSIS?

American Academy of Dermatology
888.462.DERM
www.aad.org

The Skin Cancer Foundation
800.SKIN.490
www.skincancer.org

National Cancer Institute
800.4.CANCER
www.cancer.gov



Passion for Patients is the expression of who we are and delivering patient care at the highest possible level is what we do. Our goal is to have every Dermpath Diagnostics associate exclusively focused on giving their best, realizing that there is a concerned patient, a life, behind every specimen and diagnosis. This patient centric goal is what drives the continual development of our Passion for Patients company culture.

To obtain more information about skin cancer and to learn more about the services Dermpath Diagnostics provides, please visit our website.

PASSION FOR PATIENTS

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