



Basal Cell Carcinoma (basal cell cancer)

Your doctor has informed you that you have a basal cell carcinoma. This is the most common type of skin cancer in Sweden, with around 60,000 cases reported every year. It is also the least dangerous of all the skin cancers, since it only grows in the skin and does not spread to other parts of the body. This means that virtually all basal-cell-carcinoma patients can be cured.

Basal cell carcinomas often form in sun-damaged skin. It is primarily the total amount of sunlight a person has been exposed to during their lifetime that causes these skin lesions. Light-skinned people run a greater risk of developing basal cell carcinomas than dark-skinned people.

Signs of disease

Basal cell carcinomas vary in appearance. Most often, they appear as nodules in the skin with well-defined borders and a pearly, reddish colour. They may also develop ulcers, but not necessarily. A basal cell carcinoma may also appear as a red, slightly scaly, eczema-like spot on the skin, or as a sore that won't heal. It is most common to develop basal cell carcinomas after the age of 40, and they are somewhat more common in men. They mainly develop on the face and torso.

Treatment

Basal cell carcinomas must be treated. Superficial basal cell carcinomas can be treated via freezing using liquid nitrogen (cryosurgery). Other, thicker basal cell carcinomas can be removed by freezing (cryosurgery) or burnt off (cauterised) after scraping off most of the lesion (curettage). In some cases, a minor surgical procedure performed under a local anaesthetic may be needed. Certain superficial lesions are treated using a special type of light therapy called photodynamic therapy (PDT).

Check-ups

Most patients won't need to schedule regular check-ups with a dermatologist. However, there is a risk that your lesion might reoccur, or that new basal cell carcinomas may appear on other parts of your body. If you notice anything suspicious, please contact your doctor at your local healthcare centre (*vårdcentral*).

Sun protection

Using sunscreen regularly protects against basal cell cancer of the skin and related, precancerous conditions. To reduce your risk and slow the rate of new, similar skin lesions occurring, you should protect yourself from the sun. The sun's UV radiation is strongest in the middle of the day, between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Stay in the shade when possible. You will get the best protection by covering up with clothing and a hat. Clothing made from tightly woven fabric offers very effective protection. You should apply sunscreen to any body parts that you cannot cover with clothing. Your sunscreen should have a sun protection factor (SPF) of **at least** 30, be marked with the UVA symbol and be pleasant to use. Apply a generous amount and repeat the application during the day and after bathing. Avoid tanning in solariums.