

Department of plastic surgery

Kerato acanthoma

What is Kerato acanthoma?

Kerato acanthoma (KA) is a skin lesion that develops on sun-exposed areas such as the face, forearms, back of hands and lower leg. It affects the middle-aged, elderly, and mostly white-skinned people. It is also common in people whose immune system is not working as well as usual due to drugs or diseases.

It usually appears as a small swelling on the surface of the skin that rapidly increases in size in two to four weeks. Sometimes a crust develops in the centre. It may form an ulcer or bleed. If untreated, the lesion may heal in a few months leaving a permanent dented scar. Kerato acanthoma is not a malignant cancer but it looks similar to a skin cancer called squamous cell carcinoma. A definite diagnosis can sometimes be difficult. For that reason and also to prevent marked scarring, it is often necessary to surgically remove the lesion. If Kerato acanthoma is completely excised no further treatment is needed.

These lesions are thought to be caused by damage to the skin from ultraviolet radiation contained in sunlight. To prevent further new lesions, you must take the following steps:

- Examine your skin regularly and seek medical advice for any lesion that does not heal in six weeks.
- Protect your skin from ultraviolet radiation in strong sunlight:
 - Avoid exposure to the sun.
 - Cover up with loose fitting but closely woven clothes.
 - Wear a wide-brimmed hat and protective sunglasses.
 - Use a high SPF sunscreen (factor 15 or more). When choosing a sunscreen, look for one which protects against UVB, and has the UVA circle logo and/or 4 or 5 UVA stars to protect against UVA.
Apply plenty of sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going out in the sun, and reapply every two hours and straight after swimming and towel-drying.
 - Avoid tanning under sunlamps.

Further information

- Your GP.
- Clinical nurses specialist at The Christie **0161 918 7587**.
- Macmillan Cancer Support has information on all aspects of cancer. Lines answered by specialist nurses. Freephone **0808 808 0000** open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, www.macmillan.org.uk
- British Association of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons www.bapras.org.uk



If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

