

Department of plastic surgery

Keratoacanthoma

What is keratoacanthoma?

Keratoacanthoma (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 light-skinned people. It is also common in people whose immune system is not working well due to drugs or diseases.

It usually appears as a small swelling on the surface of the skin that quickly gets bigger in 2 to 4 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. Keratoacanthoma is not a cancer but it looks similar to a skin cancer called squamous cell carcinoma. It can be difficult to know for sure that it is not skin cancer. The lesion is often removed to make sure, and also to prevent marked scarring. You will not need further treatment for this if the keratoacanthoma is completely removed.

These lesions are most commonly caused by damage to the skin from ultraviolet radiation contained in sunlight. To prevent further new lesions:

- examine your skin regularly and seek medical advice for any lesion that does not heal in 6 weeks.
- protect your skin from ultraviolet radiation in strong sunlight:
 - avoid excessive 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 50 or more). Choose a sunscreen, that 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. Reapply every 2 hours and straight after swimming and towel-drying
 - avoid sunbeds

Contacts

If you have concerns or questions, ring:

Clinical nurse specialist at The Christie: **0161 918 7587**.



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Further information

Macmillan Cancer Support has information on all aspects of cancer. Lines answered by specialist nurses. Freephone **0808 808 0000** open 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week 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.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. 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