

Common Skin Spots

NOTE: This guide is to help you understand the diagnosis your dermatologist has made. It is not a guide to help you make a diagnosis on your own or at home. If you ever have concerns or questions about any spot on your skin, consult your dermatologist.

Seborrheic Keratosis

A non-cancerous (benign) skin growth that is often brown to flesh-colored and rough/flaky. These often feel or look like a growth that is stuck onto the skin. They generally require no treatment. If itchy or painful, they may be treated for medical purposes. If they are symptom-free, they may be treated for cosmetic reasons, but, as with any cosmetic treatment, insurance will generally not cover this treatment.

Cherry Angioma

These are bright red bumps that develop on the skin. Usually they develop in adulthood. Generally, no treatments are needed. They may be treated if they are painful/itchy/bleeding or for cosmetic purposes. Treatments include use of a laser or an electric needle.

Actinic Keratosis

Actinic keratosis is a precancerous growth on the skin. Usually these develop in sunlight exposed areas. They may itch or burn, but are usually without symptoms. The skin is often red and rough in affected areas. These skin spots may progress into squamous cell skin cancer. Treatment of actinic keratosis is usually advised; they can be treated in many different ways- liquid nitrogen freezing is the most common.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma

This is the second most common of all skin cancers. Chronic sunlight exposure is the most common cause. 3 to 5% or more of these cancers may spread inside the body (metastasize), with serious consequences. Treatments vary, but usually involve surgery.

Basal Cell Carcinoma

This is the most common of all skin cancers. It is also primarily caused by chronic sunlight exposure. It is very rare for these to spread inside the body, but like any cancer, they may grow and be destructive or disfiguring. Treatments also vary- both medical and surgical options are available. For most of these cancers, some form of minor surgery is needed.