



NCCN QUICK GUIDE™ Squamous Cell Skin Cancer

This NCCN QUICK GUIDE™ sheet summarizes key points from the complete [NCCN Guidelines for Patients®: Squamous Cell Skin Cancer](#). These guidelines explain which tests and treatments are recommended by experts in cancer. To view and download the guidelines, visit NCCN.org/patients or, to order printed copies, visit Amazon.com

NCCN Guidelines
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Page Number



What is SCC (squamous cell carcinoma)?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A very common type of cancer in light-skinned people ■ Usually starts in areas of the body exposed to sun, especially the head and neck ■ Once an SCC is completely removed, most people are cured ■ Rarely spreads to distant areas of the body, but can spread and cause severe damage in the area where it forms 	9
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What causes SCC?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Most squamous cell skin cancers are caused by spending too much time in the sun over the course of many years, especially in people who sunburn easily. ■ You may be more likely to get squamous cell skin cancer if you have a weakened immune system, certain genetic syndromes, actinic keratoses, or Bowen's disease. 	8
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How is SCC treated?

Superficial treatments	These treatments affect only the top layer of the skin and should only be used for the earliest possible stage of SCC (called SCC in situ or Bowen's disease). Photodynamic therapy, cryotherapy, and topical therapies are superficial treatments.	13
Surgery	Squamous cell skin cancer is usually treated with surgery. The three main surgical techniques used to treat squamous cell skin cancer are curettage & electrodesiccation, Mohs surgery, and standard excision. Mohs surgery is preferred for high-risk SCC.	14
Radiation therapy	The best way to treat SCC is usually surgery. However, radiation therapy is an option for people who don't want surgery. Radiation therapy may also be used after surgery to try to kill remaining cancer cells.	16
Systemic therapy	Systemic therapy (includes chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy) is not used often to treat SCC. It may be needed for SCC that has spread to nearby lymph nodes or to distant areas of the body and cannot be removed with surgery.	17



If SCC spreads to nearby lymph nodes

- SCC that has spread to nearby lymph nodes is called “regional”.
- Regional SCC can usually be cured if found early.
- The best way to treat regional SCC is with surgery to remove the tumor and nearby lymph nodes.
- Radiation therapy may be given after surgery to kill leftover cancer cells. If you can't have surgery, radiation is an option. Systemic therapy may also be used.

[27](#)

How can I prevent more SCCs from forming?

- Monitoring for new SCCs during the first two years after treatment is very important.
- NCCN experts recommend having regular skin exams by your doctor, doing skin self-exams, and being strict about sun protection.
- People at high-risk of getting squamous cell skin cancer may benefit from medicines or topical treatments that can help prevent skin cancers from forming.

[32](#)

If cancer spreads to distant sites

There isn't much research on the best way to treat metastatic SCC. If you are able to join a clinical trial, NCCN experts recommend doing so. Treatments that may be given as part of a clinical trial include chemotherapy, targeted therapy, or immunotherapy. An immunotherapy drug called cemiplimab (Libtayo®) is FDA-approved for metastatic SCC.

[35](#)

How do I decide between treatment options?

- Don't be shy about asking your doctors questions. They are there to help.
- Getting a second opinion is encouraged. Even doctors get second opinions!
- Take the time to compare the pros and cons of treatment options.

[37](#)

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