NHS
Calderdale and Huddersfield
NHS Foundation Trust

Dermatology Department

Basal Cell Carcinoma

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about Basal Cell Carcinoma
It tells you:

- What it is
- What causes it?
- What symptoms to look for
- What are the treatment options?
- Prevention
- Follow Up

What is a Basal Cell Carcinoma?

Basal cell carcinoma is the commonest type of skin cancer and is often referred to as a BCC or rodent ulcer. It is a slow growing skin cancer and does not spread to other parts of the body. However if you have had one BCC, you are more likely to develop a new one.

What causes a Basal Cell Carcinoma?

Basal cell carcinoma is thought to develop as a result of long term sun exposure. While they can be a nuisance they do not cause any serious harm or become life threatening.

People who are fair skinned and have a tendency to burn in the sun are at a higher risk of developing a BCC; however anyone can develop a BCC, especially outdoor workers or those who have spent a considerable time in a sunny climate.

What are the symptoms to look for?

A red scaly area of skin that does not heal.

An open sore area or spot that does not heal within 6-8 weeks. A scab or crust may form that falls off recurrently leaving an ulcerated area.

A firm raised area that can be flesh coloured, pink, shiny, red or pigmented (brown coloured) like a mole.

A flat scarred shiny area of skin that appears pale or white compared with the surrounding skin.

compassionate care

What are the treatment options?

Watch and wait approach - If the patch is not troublesome, it can be kept under observation, if a patient requests not to have treatment.

Cryotherapy - treated by freezing with Liquid Nitrogen.

Curettage and Cautery – scraping off the BCC and burning the area of skin scraped (to stop bleeding).

Surgical removal – the area of affected skin is totally cut out.

Special ointment/cream – to be applied over a number of weeks.

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) – cream applied for 3 hours and then the area/s is/are treated with light for approximately 8 minutes.

Your doctor or Specialist Nurse will advise you what the best form of treatment is for you.

Factors that may be taken in to consideration are when deciding the best treatment:

- Site, size and thickness of the BCC.
- Cosmetic outcome.
- Medication you are taking.
- Ability to attend for treatments.

Prevention and Sun Awareness

Avoid Sunburn!

Reduce the amount of skin you are exposing to the sun – cover up, wear a brimmed hat, long sleeves and trousers

Avoid strong sunlight between 11am and 3pm. Don't use sunbeds

Use a sunscreen (Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 30) and apply 2-3 hourly, the higher the SPF the better protection. A 'broad spectrum' sunscreen protects against UVA and UVB, and one that is water resistant does not wash off or sweat off following application is the better choice. Check the expiry date.

Remember to protect your skin if you are going on a winter skiing/beach holiday.

Check your skin once a month. A friend or family can help with this.

If you notice any changes to your skin or you are worried about your skin see your General Practitioner (GP).

Follow up:

Your doctor or specialist nurse will decide the type of follow-up you receive as a result of the treatment you have had and how successful it has been.

Further Information can be obtained from the following:

Macmillan Cancer Support
Information Service
Telephone No. 0808 808 0000
www.macmillan.org.uk

British Association of Dermatologist
4 Fitzroy Square
London
W1T 5 HQ
www.bad.org.uk

Marc's Line Resource Centre
Dermatology Treatment Centre
Level 3
Salisbury District Hospital Salisbury
SP2 8BJ
www.wessexcancer.org

Reference source: Patient Information Leaflet - Basal Cell Carcinoma. 2008 www.bad.org.uk

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Skin Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist
Dermatology Department
Calderdale Royal Hospital
Telephone No: 01422 224154

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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