



# SKIN | CANCER | FOCUS

## What is a Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)?

A **Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)** is a **type of skin cancer** that arises from the **squamous cells** — the flat cells that make up most of the outer layer of the skin.

It is the **second most common** form of skin cancer in Australia, after Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC).

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### Causes and Risk Factors

SCC usually develops after **long-term sun exposure** and damage to the skin. The main risk factors include:

- Fair skin that burns easily
  - History of frequent or severe sunburns
  - Outdoor work or hobbies with sun exposure
  - Older age
  - Weak immune system
  - Previous skin cancers or precancerous lesions (like solar keratoses)
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### What Does It Look Like?

An SCC can appear as:

- A **scaly, crusted, or ulcerated lump** that may bleed easily
- A **sore that does not heal**
- A **thickened red patch** on sun-exposed areas such as the face, scalp, ears, hands, or lower legs

SCCs tend to grow faster than BCCs and can sometimes spread (metastasize) if left untreated.

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### Diagnosis

Your doctor will examine the area and may perform a **skin biopsy** to confirm the diagnosis under a microscope.

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## Treatment

Treatment depends on the size, location, and type of SCC, but common options include:

- **Surgical excision** – removing the cancer and a small margin of healthy tissue
- **Curettage and cautery** – scraping and burning the area (for small SCCs)
- **Cryotherapy** – freezing the lesion with liquid nitrogen
- **Radiotherapy** – sometimes used when surgery is not suitable

Early treatment leads to an excellent cure rate.

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## Aftercare and Prevention

- Have **regular skin checks** (usually every 6–12 months).
  - **Protect your skin from the sun:**
    - Wear broad-brimmed hats, long sleeves, and sunglasses.
    - Use **SPF 50+ broad-spectrum sunscreen** daily.
    - Avoid tanning and solariums.
  - Report any **new, changing, or non-healing spots** to your doctor promptly.
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## Prognosis

Most SCCs are **successfully treated** when detected early.

However, advanced or untreated SCCs can **spread to lymph nodes or other organs**, which can be serious — making early detection and follow-up essential.

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