



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).

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)

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.

Diagnosis

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

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.

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.

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.
