

Understanding Adnexal Carcinomas: A Guide for Patients

What is Adnexal Carcinoma?

Adnexal carcinomas (AC) are a group of rare cancers that starts in the adnexal structures of the skin. Skin adnexa refers to additional organs of the skin, which include sweat glands, sebaceous glands, and hair follicles. When cells in these adnexal structures start growing uncontrollably, AC can develop, leading to the formation of these spots. It often appears as a small white or pink skin-colored bump, where it is most commonly found on the face or neck. While it is rare for AC to spread to other parts of the body, it is a slow, deep-spreading skin cancer, often invading nearby nerves and skin tissue. Understanding and recognizing the signs of AC can be crucial for early detection and treatment^{1, 2, 3}.

Why Do People Get AC?

The exact reason why people develop AC isn't entirely clear, but it may be linked to long-term sun exposure, similar to other types of skin cancer. Because it occurs mostly in older adults, it might also be related to changes in the skin that occur with aging upon prolonged UV radiation exposure^{1, 2, 3}.

- AC are most frequently diagnosed in individuals past the age of 50, though it can occur in younger people and even children
- There is also evidence suggesting that radiation exposure could contribute to the risk of developing AC
- Patients undergoing immunosuppression therapy may also have a higher risk of developing AC.

How Do You Know If You Have AC?

Adnexal carcinomas typically starts as a white or pink skin-colored bump, usually in areas that are more exposed to the sun, like your head or neck. It can grow slowly and might not cause any pain or discomfort initially, making it tricky to notice immediately. If you or someone you know notices an unusual spot on the skin that doesn't go away, it may be a good idea to get it checked by a dermatologist^{1, 2}.

Treating AC

The main way to treat AC is by removing it with surgery either through wide local excision or Mohs surgery. Doctors will carefully take out the AC spot to make sure it's all gone. This is usually a straightforward procedure, and because AC doesn't typically spread, getting it removed solves the problem most of the time.

Wide local excision involves cutting out the AC lesion along with some of the healthy skin around it, called the margin, to ensure all abnormal cells are removed. The size of the margin

may vary depending on the doctor's assessment of the lesion. Mohs surgery, on the other hand, involves removing the cancer layer by layer. Each layer is examined under a microscope for cancer cells at the time of the surgery. The process continues until a layer shows no signs of cancer, ensuring the complete removal of cancerous cells while preserving as much healthy tissue as possible^{3, 4}.

Looking After Your Skin

Whether you've had AC or not, it's essential to look after your skin. This means protecting yourself from the sun by wearing sunscreen, hats, and clothing that covers your skin, especially if you're going to be outside for an extended time. Regularly checking your skin for any new spots or changes and seeing a doctor for check-ups can also help catch any problems early.

Preventing skin cancer, including AC, starts with protecting your skin from the sun. Taking care of your skin now can help keep it healthy for the future!

1. Gerall CD, Sippel MR, Yracheta JL, Hogan FS. Microcystic Adnexal Carcinoma: A Rare, Commonly Misdiagnosed Malignancy. *Mil Med.* 2019;184(11-12):948-950. doi:10.1093/milmed/usz123
2. Worley B, Owen JL, Barker CA, et al. Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guidelines for Microcystic Adnexal Carcinoma: Informed by a Systematic Review. *JAMA Dermatol.* 2019;155(9):1059-1068. doi:10.1001/jamadermatol.2019.1251
3. Gordon S, Fischer C, Martin A, Rosman IS, Council ML. Microcystic Adnexal Carcinoma: A Review of the Literature. *Dermatol Surg.* 2017;43(8):1012-1016. doi:10.1097/DSS.0000000000001142
4. Yadlapati S, Zito PM, Rooney JA. Mohs Micrographic Surgery Evaluation and Treatment of Microcystic Adnexal Carcinoma. In: *StatPearls*. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; March 7, 2023.

Understanding Adnexal Carcinomas: A Guide for Caregivers

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Why Do People Get AC?

The exact reason why people develop AC isn't entirely clear, but it may be linked to long-term sun exposure, similar to other types of skin cancer. Because it occurs mostly in older adults, it might also be related to changes in your loved one's skin that occur with aging upon prolonged UV radiation exposure^{1, 2, 3}.

- AC are most frequently diagnosed in individuals past the age of 50, though it can occur in younger people and even children
- There is also evidence suggesting that radiation exposure could contribute to the risk of developing AC
- Patients undergoing immunosuppression therapy may also have a higher risk of developing AC.

How Do You Know If Your Loved One Has AC?

Adnexal Carcinoma starts as a white or pink skin-colored bump, usually in areas that are more exposed to the sun, like the head or neck. It can grow slowly and might not cause any pain or discomfort initially, making it tricky to notice immediately. If you or your loved one notices an unusual spot on the skin that doesn't go away, it may be a good idea to tell them to get it checked by a dermatologist^{1, 2}.

Treating AC

The main way to treat AC is by removing it with surgery either through wide local excision or Mohs surgery. Doctors will carefully take out the AC lump to make sure it's all gone. This is usually a straightforward procedure, and because AC doesn't typically spread, getting it removed solves the problem most of the time.

Wide local excision involves cutting out the AC lesion along with some of the healthy skin around it, called the margin, to ensure all abnormal cells are removed. The size of the margin may vary depending on the doctor's assessment of the lesion. Mohs surgery, on the other hand, involves removing the cancer layer by layer. Each layer is examined under a microscope for cancer cells at the time of the surgery. The process continues until a layer shows no signs of cancer, ensuring the complete removal of cancerous cells while preserving as much healthy tissue as possible^{3, 4}.

Looking After Your Loved One's Skin

Whether your loved one has had AC or not, it's essential for them to look after their skin. This means protecting themselves from the sun by wearing sunscreen, hats, and clothing that covers their skin, especially if they're going to be outside for an extended time. Regularly checking their skin for any new spots or changes and seeing a doctor for check-ups can also help catch any problems early.

Preventing skin cancer, including AC, starts with protecting your loved one's skin from the sun. Taking care of their skin now can help keep it healthy for the future!

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