

# Merkel Cell Carcinoma: Symptoms, Causes, Diagnosis and Treatment

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## DESCRIPTION

Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) may be a rare, aggressive sort of carcinoma with a high risk for returning (recurring) and spreading (metastasizing), often within 2 to 3 years after initial diagnosis.

It is also referred to as cutaneous APUDoma, primary neuroendocrine carcinoma of the skin, primary small cell carcinoma of the skin and trabecular carcinoma of the skin. Factors involved within the development of MCC include the Merkel cell polyomavirus (MCPyV or MCV), a weakened system and exposure to ultraviolet. Merkel-cell carcinoma usually arises on the top, neck, and extremities, also as within the perianal region and on the eyelid.

Merkel cell carcinoma most frequently develops in older people. Long-term sun exposure or a weak system may increase your risk of developing Merkel cell carcinoma.

Merkel cell carcinoma tends to grow fast and to spread quickly to other parts of your body. Treatment options for Merkel cell carcinoma often depend upon whether the cancer has spread beyond the skin.

## SYMPTOMS

The first sign of Merkel cell carcinoma is typically a fast-growing, painless nodule (tumor) on your skin. The nodule could also be skin-colored or may appear in reminder red, blue or purple. Most Merkel cell carcinomas appear on the face, head or neck, but they will develop anywhere on your body, even on areas not exposed to sunlight.

## CAUSES

It's not clear what causes Merkel cell carcinoma. Merkel cell carcinoma begins within the Merkel cells. Merkel cells are found at the bottom of the outermost layer of your skin (epidermis). Merkel cells are connected to the nerve endings within the skin that are liable for the sense of touch.

Researchers recently discovered that a standard virus plays a task in causing most cases of Merkel cell carcinoma. The virus (Merkel cell polyomavirus) lives on the skin and doesn't cause any signs or symptoms. Just how this virus causes Merkel cell carcinoma has yet to be determined. As long as the virus is extremely common and Merkel cell carcinoma is extremely rare, it's likely that other risk

factors play a task within the development of this cancer.

## PREVENTION

- Avoid the sun during peak hours
- Shield your skin and eyes
- Apply sunscreen liberally and sometimes
- Watch for changes

## DIAGNOSIS

Tests and procedures wont to diagnose Merkel cell carcinoma include:

- Physical exam
- Removing a sample of suspicious skin
- Sentinel node biopsy
- Imaging tests

## TREATMENT

Treatments for Merkel cell carcinoma can include:

### Surgery

During surgery, doctor removes the tumor alongside a border of normal skin surrounding the tumor. If there's evidence that the cancer has spread to lymph nodes within the area of the acanthoma, those lymph nodes are removed (lymph node dissection).

The surgeon most frequently uses a scalpel to chop away the cancer. In some cases, your doctor may use a procedure called Mohs surgery.

During Mohs surgery, thin layers of tissue are methodically removed and analyzed under a microscope to ascertain whether or not they contain cancer cells. If cancer is found, the operation is repeated until cancer cells are not any longer visible within the tissue. This sort of surgery takes less normal tissue thereby reducing scarring but ensures a tumor-free border of skin.

### Radiation therapy

Radiation therapy involves directing high-energy beams, like X-rays and protons, at cancer cells. During radiation treatment, you're positioned on a table and an outsized machine moves around you,

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directing the beams to express points on your body.

Radiation therapy is usually used after surgery to destroy any cancer cells that remain after the tumor is removed.

Radiation can also be used because the sole treatment in people that choose to not undergo surgery. Radiation also can be wont to treat areas where the cancer has spread.

### **Immunotherapy**

In immunotherapy, drugs are wont to help your system fight cancer. Most frequently, immunotherapy is employed to treat Merkel cell

carcinoma that has spread to other areas of your body.

### **Chemotherapy**

Chemotherapy uses drugs to kill the cancer cells. Chemotherapy drugs are often administered through a vein in your arm or taken as a pill or both.

Chemotherapy isn't used often, but recommended if Merkel cell carcinoma has spread to your lymph nodes or other organs in your body, or if it's returned despite treatment.