



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Skin Cancer

If you've been diagnosed with skin cancer, you and your doctor will need to work together to fight the cancer and take control of your symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Epidermis	The top portion of the skin, which includes cells that compose the protective outer layer of the body.
Nevus	A growth or discoloration of the skin, usually described as a birthmark or a mole. Usually, nevi are present from birth, but even nevi that arise during adulthood can be completely normal and often do not pose any health threat or turn into skin cancer. Usually, a nevus can be distinguished from skin cancer with a physical examination.
Biopsy	Removal of tissue, such as skin, allows specialists to look at the sample under a microscope to examine the features. A biopsy is often necessary to evaluate a lesion that is considered to be possible skin cancer.
Melanocyte	A cell within the epidermis that makes melanin, a pigment that provides color to the skin and eyes and protects the body from the harms of ultraviolet (UV) radiation.
UV Radiation	The sun and artificial sources create UV radiation, which can cause damage to skin cells, increasing the chance of developing skin cancer.
Carcinoma	Cancer that develops in cells that line the body. Skin cancer is often carcinoma, but carcinoma can develop in other areas of the body as well.
Melanoma	A common and aggressive type of skin cancer that develops when the DNA of melanocytes are damaged, usually as a result of UV radiation. Melanoma can be treated with surgical removal, and sometimes chemotherapy is required if the cancer has spread.
Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)	A common type of cancer arising from the squamous cells of the epidermis. As with other skin cancers, it often results from UV light exposure. It can be quite aggressive, but complete removal is often curative.
Basal Cell Carcinoma	A type of skin cancer that is generally less aggressive than most skin cancers. Basal cell carcinoma is usually treatable with removal of the abnormal cells, but it can spread, especially if it is untreated.
In Situ	Skin cancer that has not spread outside of a small area of skin.

