

## **Eyelid Cancer - Risk Factors** [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 05/2012

**ON THIS PAGE:** You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing this type of cancer. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen

A risk factor [3] is anything that increases a person's chance of developing cancer. Although risk factors often influence the development of cancer, most do not directly cause cancer. Some people with several risk factors never develop cancer, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

The following factors can raise a person's risk of developing eyelid cancer:

**Exposure to UV radiation.** Sunlight includes both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation. UVB radiation produces sunburn and plays a role in the development of basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma. UVA radiation penetrates the skin more deeply, causing photoaging or wrinkling. The role of UVA radiation in the development of non-melanoma eyelid cancer is suspected, but not certain. People who live in areas with year-round, bright sunlight have a higher risk of developing an eyelid cancer, as do those who spend significant time outside or on a tanning bed (which produces mostly UVA radiation).

**Fair skin.** Less melanin (pigment) in skin offers less protection against UV radiation. People with light hair and light-colored eyes who have skin that doesn't tan, but instead freckles or burns easily, are more likely to develop eyelid cancer.

**Gender.** Rates of skin cancer in white men have increased in recent years.

**Age.** Most basal and squamous cell cancers appear after age 50.

**A history of sunburns or fragile skin.** Skin that has been burned, sunburned, or injured from disease is at higher risk for eyelid cancer. Squamous cell and basal cell cancers more often occur with repeated, long-term exposure to the sun, while melanoma more often occurs with short-term intense exposure to sun.

**Individual history.** People with weakened immune systems or those who use certain medications are at higher risk for developing squamous cell and basal cell cancers. People with

rare, predisposing genetic conditions such as xeroderma pigmentosum [4], nevroid basal cell carcinoma syndrome [5], or albinism are at much higher risk for eyelid cancer.

**Previous skin cancer.** People who have had any form of skin cancer are at higher risk for developing another skin cancer. For instance, about 35% to 50% of people diagnosed with one basal cell cancer will develop a new cancer within five years.

**Precancerous skin conditions.** Two types of lesions, known as actinic keratoses (characterized by rough, red or brown, scaly patches on the skin), and Bowen's disease (characterized by a bright red or pink, scaly patches located on previously or presently sun-exposed skin), may be related to the development of squamous cell cancer in some people. Bowen's disease in areas not exposed to the sun may be related to arsenic exposure.

*To continue reading this guide, use the menu on the side of your screen to select another section.*

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/eyelid-cancer/risk-factors>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24868>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19727>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19452>