# Merkel Cell Carcinoma

**This leaflet will help you understand what a Merkel Cell Carcinoma is, how they are caused, what treatments are available, preventative measures and follow up care.**

## What is a Merkel Cell Carcinoma?

Merkel Carcinoma is a rare, serious type of skin cancer. Merkel cells are found in the top layer of the skin and these cells grow out of control forming a skin cancer. They are near to the nerve endings that allow us to feel touch.

## Signs and symptoms

Merkel cell carcinomas grow rapidly, appearing as a firm lump on the skin, red in colour, they are painless and range from 1-5cm or more in size. They appear mainly on sun exposed areas of the skin e.g. head, neck, arms and legs.

## Investigations

The investigation most likely to be needed is a punch biopsy (partial or full removal of the lesion) under local anaesthetic.

## Treatment

If Merkel cell is confirmed, you will be referred to a surgeon for full surgical excision of the lesion. A safety margin of non-cancerous tissue will also be excised around the lesion to try and prevent recurrence. The tissue removed will be analysed by the pathology department to ensure adequate margins have been excised.

## Does Merkel Cell Carinoma spread?

Merkel Cell Carcinoma can be cured by surgical excision. Merkel Cell Carcinoma can spread to other parts of the body and have a high risk of recurrence and spread.

## Further investigations

Following confirmation of the diagnosis and further surgery; your consultant may decide to check if there has been any spread of the cancer to other parts of the body. Scans such as a CT scan may be requested.

## Other treatments

If the cancer has spread, the consultant will refer you to an Oncologist (a doctor who specialises in the treatment of people diagnosed with cancer). The Oncologist may recommend radiotherapy (the use of radiation to kill cancer cells) or chemotherapy (drugs used to kill cancer cells).

## Follow up care

The consultant- or specialist nurse will see you approximately every 3 months following your diagnosis for 3 years; reducing to 6 monthly for the following 2 years. Some patients may need to be then followed up annually after the 5 years.

If you should notice any new changes to your skin it is essential you seek professional advice from your specialist nurse, consultant, or GP.

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## If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

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www.cht.nhs.uk

## If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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