

MEN health

a spot of bother

Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world and West Aussie men are most at risk, often enduring daily exposure to our strong sun at work. But prevention is possible

THE ISSUE

Solar keratoses or sunspots are hard, sometimes sensitive, red, flaky or crusty patches on the skin that are caused by excessive UV radiation exposure over time.

Often found on the head, neck and backs of hands, they can occur in all skin types, even people with 'strong' or olive skin.

Hair loss in men makes them even more susceptible to developing solar keratoses.

"Keratoses are usually a warning sign that the skin has been damaged by the sun and that skin cancers may develop," says plastic and reconstructive surgeon, Dr Vij Vijayasekaran, from the Western Australian Plastic Surgery Centre and Assure Medispa.

The WA Plastic Surgery Centre reports that around 70 per cent of the patients admitted for surgery to remove keratoses and pre-cancerous lesions are men.

TREATMENT

Treatment is usually by surgical excision and reconstruction under anaesthetic. Scarring typically results. Reconstruction may include skin grafts or flaps to resurface the defects created by excision of the lesion.



COST

Surgery costs start from \$164 for a small, non-invasive lesion, excluding anaesthetist, hospital, theatre and pathology fees.

PREVENTION

Good news: there are a few easy steps you can take to avoid going under the knife. Dr Vijayasekaran says adopting a regime of good skincare, as early in life as possible, will significantly reduce your risk of surgical intervention down the track.

"A growing number of men in WA, particularly fly-in-fly-out workers, are now recognising that sun exposure on the job could leave them with a legacy of prematurely aged, pigmented and lined skin. The sun is the single most damaging thing, so having a good skin regime early will pay off in years to come."

He suggests, as a bare minimum, using a topical Vitamin C serum together with sunscreen, every day. Washing your face in the morning and at night is also recommended. "Some may see this as a 'girl thing', but it's not very manly having parts of your face or ear removed when you need to have pre-cancerous lesions cut out."

Consult a doctor if a new lesion, spot or blemish does not resolve within six weeks.