**What is Merkel Cell Carcinoma?**

Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) is a **rare and aggressive form of skin cancer**. In MCC, malignant cells form in the top layer of the skin, close to the nerve endings that sense touch. Once the cancer starts to metastasize, or spread, to other parts of the body, it becomes metastatic MCC.

**Diagnosis and Prognosis**

MCC is often misdiagnosed as other skin cancers and grows at an exponential rate on chronically sun-damaged skin. The prognosis for MCC is poor and worsens as the tumor metastasizes.

Proportion of patients surviving beyond 5 years:

- **30–64%**
- **Fewer than 20%**

**Incidence**

Epidemiologic data suggest that each year there are:

- **Approximately 2,500 new cases of MCC** diagnosed in the US
- **Overall, metastatic disease is found in 5–12% of patients with MCC**

**Symptoms**

Merkel cell carcinomas commonly appear as painless pink, red or purple bumps on the skin. They usually appear on areas of skin exposed to the sun, such as the face, neck, arms, and legs, but they can occur anywhere on the body. Sometimes the skin on the top of the tumor might break open and bleed.

**Key Risk Factors**

- Exposure to a lot of natural or artificial sunlight
- A weakened immune system due to diseases, such as HIV or chronic lymphocytic leukemia
- Taking medication that suppresses the immune system (e.g., after an organ transplant)
- A history of other types of cancer
- Older age (≥50 years)
- Male
- Fair skin
- Infection with the Merkel cell polyomavirus, present in approximately 80% of MCC tumors
References


Immuno-oncology is a top priority for Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, and Pfizer Inc. The global strategic alliance between Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, and Pfizer Inc., New York, US, enables the companies to benefit from each other's strengths and capabilities and further explore the therapeutic potential of immunotherapy. The alliance is focused on developing high-priority international clinical programs to investigate immunotherapy regimens, and is striving to find new ways to treat cancer.

About EMD Serono, Inc.

EMD Serono is the biopharmaceutical business of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany in the US and Canada - a leading science and technology company - focused exclusively on specialty care. For more than 40 years, the business has integrated cutting-edge science, innovative products and industry-leading patient support and access programs. EMD Serono has deep expertise in neurology, fertility and endocrinology, as well as a robust pipeline of potential therapies in oncology, immuno-oncology and immunology as R&D focus areas. Today, the business has 1,200 employees around the country with commercial, clinical and research operations based in the company's home state of Massachusetts. www.emdserono.com.

About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 50,000 employees work to further develop technologies that improve and enhance life – from biopharmaceutical therapies to treat cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting-edge systems for scientific research and production, to liquid crystals for smartphones and LCD televisions. In 2015, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of €12.85 billion in 66 countries.

Founded in 1668, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck, Darmstadt, Germany, holds the global rights to the Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.

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