

# Kevin Jonas has basal cell carcinoma; here's what you should know about this form of skin cancer

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Kevin Jonas has become the latest celebrity to share news of a skin cancer diagnosis. The 36-year-old singer and actor [took to Instagram](#) to reveal he'd recently been diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma at his hairline—then documented the results of surgery he'd had to remove it. At the end of his video, Jonas urged fans to "get your moles checked."

Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common form of skin cancer, affecting [millions of people](#) worldwide each year. It's a form of non-melanoma skin cancer. While melanomas arise from melanocyte cells that make the pigment in our skin, BCCs as well as [squamous cell carcinomas](#) (SCCs) develop from keratinocytes. This is the main type of cell found in the outer layers of our skin.

Keratinocyte skin cancers are much less likely to spread (metastasize) around the body than melanoma. As it is metastasis that typically leads a cancer to become fatal, BCC is considered to be a less serious form of skin cancer than melanoma.

What BCC does share in common with melanoma is its major risk factor: exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, either from the sun or tanning beds. In the case of BCC, the cause is usually cumulative exposure [to the sun](#). For this reason, these cancers often appear on areas of the body that are constantly exposed to the sun, such as the face.

BCC and other skin cancers are more common in older people as they have had more time to accumulate sun damage to their skin cells. Almost half of all non-melanoma skin cancers in the UK [are diagnosed in the over-75s](#). But as Jonas illustrates, they can occur in people of any age.

These cancers are also much more common in people with light-colored skin, as the skin pigment [melanin](#) provides some protection against the damaging effects of UV radiation. However, it does occur in people with [darker skin tones](#).

BCC appears as an [unusual growth or patch](#) on the skin. They can be either bumpy or flat and sometimes crusty. Although some can appear pigmented (particularly in [people with darker skin](#)), they are not moles because they don't arise from melanocytes. It's important to be aware that most don't look like a mole and are translucent, white, pink or the same colour as your skin.

Because there are many ways that BCC can present, people [are advised](#) to visit a doctor if they notice an abnormal spot or sore patch on their skin that doesn't get better within four weeks. It's also a good idea to check your skin regularly so you know what's normal for you.

Basal cell carcinomas are usually removed surgically, as Jonas's has been. The removed tissue will then be tested to ensure that all the cancer has been removed. Depending on the [surgical technique](#) used, the removed tissue may even be tested while the patient is present in case more tissue needs to be removed in the same session.

Sometimes non-surgical methods are used to treat the cancer—for example, if the BCC hasn't penetrated very deeply into the skin or if the patient isn't well enough to undergo surgery. In these cases, topical chemotherapy drugs or [photodynamic therapy](#) may be used. In [photodynamic therapy](#), the patient is given an inactive drug either as a tablet, an injection or directly applied to the skin. The tumor is then exposed to light of a particular wavelength, which activates the drug and kills the [cancer cells](#).

For most patients, these treatments will be effective in treating the

cancer. But research shows [up to 60% of patients](#) diagnosed with BCC or SCC will develop one or more new skin cancers in the following decade. This is why it's important to have regular check-ups and take extra precautions when spending time in the sun.

By sharing his experience, Jonas will almost certainly have helped raise awareness of skin cancer. This has been dubbed [the Hugh Jackman effect](#) by a group of researchers. They found that Google searches for "[basal cell carcinoma](#)" increase whenever the Wolverine actor, who has been [diagnosed with multiple BCCs](#), publicly discusses his most recent diagnosis or surgery.

As with any cancer, the earlier a basal cell carcinoma is diagnosed and treated, the better the outcome. By encouraging people to be aware of the need to get unusual skin growths and patches checked out by a doctor and being open about his surgery, Jonas has started a conversation that will hopefully lead to more people being diagnosed and treated early.

Although BCC is very treatable, it's better if people avoid developing BCC in the first place. Alongside checking your [skin](#) regularly for abnormal spots and sores, you should also try to [avoid UV exposure](#) as much as possible. This includes staying in the shade when the sun is at its most intense and covering up with clothing and using sunscreen when in the sun.

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