

Actinic Keratosis

Complete discussion guide

A printable set of questions to bring to appointments with your care team. Each section below is also available as its own one-page checklist.

Sections

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis>



What Is an Actinic Keratosis, and How Is It Different From Skin Cancer?

Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/what-is-ak-vs-skin-cancer>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Does this particular AK have any features that concern you, or is it low-risk to watch?

- ☐ Would a biopsy help clarify whether this spot has started to invade, or is treatment reasonable without one?

- ☐ How many AKs do I have, and does that change your recommended treatment approach?

- ☐ What changes in this spot should prompt me to call you before my next visit?

- ☐ How often should I have my skin checked given my history of AKs?



How Do I Know Whether an AK Needs Treatment Now or Can Be Watched Safely?

Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/treat-now-vs-watch>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Does this specific AK have any features — thickness, tenderness, growth — that make you want to treat it now rather than watch it?

- ☐ Given my health history (immune status, prior skin cancers, other conditions), does that change how aggressively you'd approach a borderline spot?

- ☐ If we choose to watch this lesion, what specifically should prompt me to call you before the next visit?

- ☐ How does the location of this AK — ear, lip, scalp versus elsewhere — factor into your recommendation?

- ☐ If I have many AKs, does that change whether individual lesions get watched versus treated as a group?



What Are the Treatment Options for Actinic Keratoses, and How Do I Pick the Right One?

Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/treatment-options>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

☐ Given the number and location of my AKs, would you recommend lesion-directed or field therapy?

☐ What kind of reaction should I expect from this specific treatment, and how long should it last?

☐ Are there sun-protection or activity restrictions I need to follow during treatment?

☐ How will we know if the treatment worked, and when should I come back to check?

☐ If this treatment doesn't fully clear things, what's the next option?



What Are the Risks of Leaving an Actinic Keratosis Untreated?

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/progression-risk-untreated>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Given my overall number of AKs and sun-damage history, am I in a higher-risk category, or is my risk closer to average?

- ☐ Am I on any medication — for a transplant or another condition — that suppresses my immune system and raises my skin cancer risk?

- ☐ Do any of my current AKs sit in a higher-risk location, like my ears, lips, or scalp?

- ☐ Is there a lesion that keeps coming back or has never fully cleared that we should address differently?

- ☐ If I choose not to treat a particular spot now, what would make you recommend revisiting that decision?



How Often Should I Get Skin Exams When I Have AKs?

Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/monitoring-schedule>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Based on my history, how often should I be coming in for a full skin exam?

- ☐ Do any of my risk factors — prior skin cancer, immune status, sun exposure history — push me toward more frequent visits?

- ☐ Is there anything specific about my skin you'd like me to keep an eye on between now and my next visit?

- ☐ What changes should prompt me to call before my scheduled appointment?

- ☐ Would keeping a photo log of my AKs be helpful for you to track at future visits?



What Skin-Care and Sun-Protection Habits Help Reduce New AKs?

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/prevention-and-sun-protection>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Given how many AKs I've had, am I a reasonable candidate for oral nicotinamide?

- ☐ Are there specific areas of my skin where you'd recommend I be especially strict about sunscreen or clothing?

- ☐ Is a prescription-strength sunscreen or a specific formulation better suited to my skin type?

- ☐ Should I be doing any field-directed treatment alongside these prevention habits, or is prevention enough on its own right now?

- ☐ How will we know if these prevention steps are working, versus if I still need more active treatment?



What Do I Do When I Have Many AKs? Does the Approach Differ?

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/field-therapy-multiple-aks>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Given how many AKs I have and where they are, would you recommend field therapy, spot treatment, or a combination?

- ☐ Which field agent fits my skin type, schedule, and tolerance for irritation best?

- ☐ What should the reaction look like during treatment, and what would be a sign to call you instead of waiting it out?

- ☐ If this course doesn't clear things well enough, what's the next option?

- ☐ How soon after finishing treatment will we know whether it worked, and when should I come back to be re-checked?



How Do I Talk to My Doctor About Managing AKs Over Time and Monitoring Changes?

Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/talking-to-your-doctor>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

If you only bring five questions to your next visit, make them these:

- ☐ Given my current number and history of AKs, how often should I be seen?

- ☐ Is there a standing, long-term management plan for me, rather than treating each new spot as a separate event?

- ☐ What specific changes in a spot should prompt me to call before my next scheduled visit?

- ☐ Why is this treatment the right choice for this spot, and what are the alternatives?

- ☐ What sun-protection or lifestyle changes would most reduce how many new AKs I develop?
