

Merkel Cell Carcinoma

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.

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma>



How Is Merkel Cell Carcinoma Diagnosed and Staged?

Merkel Cell Carcinoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma/diagnosis-and-staging>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ What did my biopsy and immunostains show, and was the tumor tested for the Merkel cell polyomavirus?

- ☐ Will I have a sentinel lymph node biopsy, and when — before, during, or after removing the primary tumor?

- ☐ What imaging will I have for staging, and will you use PET/CT or CT?

- ☐ What is my clinical stage now, and could it change after surgery and node results?

- ☐ Will my case be reviewed by a multidisciplinary team experienced with MCC?

- ☐ Should I get a second opinion on the pathology at a center that sees MCC often?



What the AEIOU Warning Signs of Merkel Cell Carcinoma Mean

Merkel Cell Carcinoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma/aeiou-warning-signs>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

☐ This bump has grown over the past few weeks — should it be biopsied now rather than watched?

☐ How many AEIOU features do you think this lesion has?

☐ I am immunosuppressed — does that change how quickly this needs to be evaluated?

☐ If the biopsy is not MCC, what else could this be, and how will we follow it?

☐ If it is MCC, who will coordinate my staging work-up and how soon can that start?



Merkel Cell Polyomavirus and Immune Suppression: Why MCC Develops

Merkel Cell Carcinoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma/merkel-cell-polyomavirus-and-immune-suppression>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Was my tumor tested for the Merkel cell polyomavirus, and what was the result?

- ☐ If my tumor is virus-positive, can I use the blood antibody test to help monitor for recurrence?

- ☐ I take immune-suppressing medication — can it be safely reduced or adjusted, and who decides that?

- ☐ Does my immune status change my recommended follow-up schedule or imaging?

- ☐ If I need immunotherapy and I am a transplant recipient, how will you balance that against rejection risk?



Merkel Cell Carcinoma Treatment Options: Surgery, Radiation, and Immunotherapy

Merkel Cell Carcinoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma/treatment-options>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ What is my stage, and which treatments does that call for — surgery, radiation, immunotherapy, or a combination?

- ☐ Will I need radiation after surgery? What features of my tumor drive that recommendation?

- ☐ In what order will treatments happen, and how many weeks apart?

- ☐ Is my case being reviewed by a multidisciplinary tumor board?

- ☐ Is there a clinical trial I should consider now, including immunotherapy before surgery?

- ☐ What are the expected side effects of each part of my plan, and how will they be managed?



Why Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy Is Routine for Merkel Cell Carcinoma

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma/sentinel-lymph-node-biopsy>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Will my sentinel lymph node biopsy be done at the same time as the wide excision?

- ☐ Who reads the node pathology, and are MCC-specific immunostains used?

- ☐ If the node is positive, will you recommend radiation, surgery to remove the nodes, or both?

- ☐ What are the risks of the procedure for me — lymphedema, numbness, seroma, wound issues?

- ☐ If a biopsy is not recommended in my case, what is the reason, and how will you monitor the nodes instead?



Follow-Up Care and Monitoring for Recurrence After Merkel Cell Carcinoma

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<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma/follow-up-and-recurrence-monitoring>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Given my stage, how often should I be seen, and for how many years?

- ☐ Will I have scheduled imaging? Which scans, how often, and for how long?

- ☐ Was my tumor virus-positive, and can I use the antibody blood test to help monitor for recurrence?

- ☐ Which clinician "owns" my surveillance — dermatology, surgical oncology, or medical oncology?

- ☐ Exactly what should I check at home, and how do I reach you quickly if I find something?

- ☐ Does my immune status change any of the above?



Advanced or Metastatic Merkel Cell Carcinoma and Checkpoint Immunotherapy

Merkel Cell Carcinoma

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/merkel-cell-carcinoma/advanced-metastatic-mcc-immunotherapy>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

☐ Is checkpoint immunotherapy the right first treatment for me, and which drug do you recommend?

☐ How will we know if it is working, and how often will I have scans?

☐ What immune-related side effects should I watch for, and who do I call, day or night?

☐ If it works, how long do I stay on it? If it stops working, what is next?

☐ Do I have an autoimmune condition or a transplant that changes this decision?

☐ Is there a clinical trial I should consider now?