



DERMATOLOGY
ASSOCIATES OF ITHACA
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DID YOU KNOW?

Actinic keratosis is also called *solar keratosis* and may be referred to as **precancerous lesions**. Anyone who has AK's may continue to get new AK's throughout their life.



Ultraviolet rays from the sun are still damaging the skin during the winter and on cloudy days. Use a facial moisturizer with SPF 15 or higher on a daily basis and SPF 30 or higher when outside.



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ACTINIC KERATOSES

Actinic keratoses (AK's) are one of the most common dermatologic diagnoses, affecting roughly 58 million people in the US. AK's are considered the **earliest stage in the development of skin cancer** caused by accumulated damage to the skin cells from UV rays. Often, these lesions appear to be dry, rough and scaly. They are commonly found on sun-exposed skin including face, scalp, ears, hands and feet. It is important to have these lesions treated because they may progress into non melanoma skin cancers such as squamous and basal cell carcinoma.

HOW ARE AK'S TREATED?

At Dermatology Associates of Ithaca, cryosurgery/liquid nitrogen (aka "cold spray") is most often used to treat these lesions (cryosurgery is covered by insurances because the treatment is medically necessary). The procedure freezes off the top layer of atypical cells, which flake off within a few days and are replaced by new skin cells.

Some patients experience a stinging or burning sensation during and/or after the treatment. Short term skin redness can be a side effect of this procedure; occasionally flat white spots may occur. No special care is required after this procedure; patients may apply makeup, wash their face or swim.

Prescription topical medications, such as imiquimod cream or 5-fluorouracil cream, can also be prescribed to treat AK's.

TIPS FOR SUN PROTECTION:

- Make it a daily routine, even during the winter, to apply SPF 15 (or higher) daily.
- Seek shade when possible and avoid sun exposure between 10AM and 4PM.
- Wear protective clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat that protects the nose and tops of ears.
- Choose a **broad spectrum** sunscreen that protects from **both UVA and UVB** radiation with at least SPF 30 and apply 30 minutes before sun exposure.
- It's important to remember that sun exposure is accumulated throughout life, but it's never too late to start prevention for new lesions.