

If you have any growths on your skin that look like these, you may have a precancerous growth called actinic keratosis (AK).

Where we get precancerous skin growths

Precancerous skin growths develop on skin that's gotten lots of sun over the years. If you haven't protected your skin from the sun, you may have precancerous skin growths. Called AKs, these growths usually appear after 40 years of age.



Actinic keratosis can appear before 40 years of age

If you live in an area that gets intense sunlight all year, such as Florida or Arizona, and haven't protected your skin from the sun, you may get AKs earlier. AKs also often appear earlier in people who use tanning beds and sun lamps.

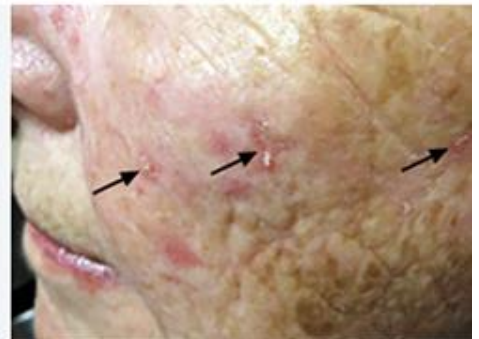


What to look for

Signs that you have AKs are often subtle. AKs usually begin as a patch of rough-feeling skin. When rubbed, the rough patch may feel painful. The following images show you what AKs typically look like.

Actinic keratosis often form on the face

AKs tend to be dry, scaly, and pink or red patches on the skin.



Actinic keratosis are common on the backs of the hands

AKs form on skin that's received lots of sun over the years. This patient's many age spots and AKs indicate lots of sun exposure. Arrows point to the AKs, which are the reddish pink spots.



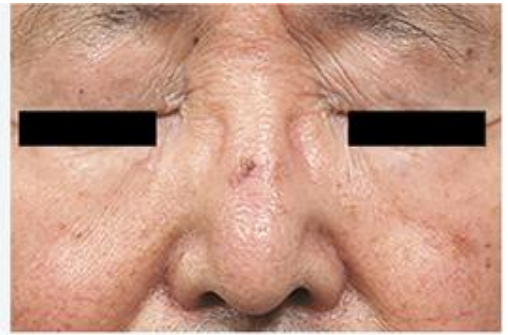
Actinic keratosis may be covered with scale

AKs can appear as white, scaly, wart-like growths on the skin, as seen here on this patient's hand.



Actinic keratosis usually develop on the face, hands, or bald scalp

While many AKs are red or pink, some appear as brown spots. This man has a brownish AK. It's the spot you see on his nose.



Some actinic keratosis look like age spots

These brown patches, which could be mistaken for age spots, are AKs. Unlike age spots, AKs tend to feel rough.



Actinic keratosis can form on the lip

A white, rough-feeling patch on your lip could be an AK. When an AK forms on the lip, the lips often feel extremely dry and may crack easily. It's especially important to see a dermatologist if you notice any of these changes to your lip.



An actinic keratosis can look like a horn

While any AK can turn into a skin cancer, horns are more likely to do so. If you have a horn-like growth on your skin, it's definitely time to see a dermatologist.

