

Here comes the sun

The facts about skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the UK and is linked to overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) light. There are two different types, known as non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) and malignant melanoma. 100,000 cases of NMSC and 13,000 malignant melanomas are diagnosed every year in the UK. The rate of melanoma has quadrupled in the last 30 years, making melanoma the most common type of cancer affecting 15-34 year olds. Malignant melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer and successful treatment can depend on early detection.

Get to know your skin

- Moles and freckles on the skin are common.
- It is important to know what is normal. Subtle changes may be early signs of skin cancer which need to be checked by a doctor. Getting to know your own skin will help you spot changes early. Use a mirror or ask someone to check the places you can't see easily.
- Check your skin once a month and report any changes without delay to your doctor.

Malignant melanoma

Any changes to moles should be checked by a doctor. The **ABCDE** guide is an easy way to identify some of the most common things to look for. Also keep an eye out for any 'Ugly Duckling' moles which look different from others around it!



Normal mole



A

Asymmetry

The two halves of the mole do not look the same



B

Border

Edges of the mole may be irregular, blurred or jagged



C

Colour

The colour of the mole may be uneven with more than one shade



D

Diameter

Many worrying moles are at least 6mm in diameter (size of a pencil eraser)



E

Evolving

Any change to a mole means it's evolving and needs to be checked urgently



Ugly Duckling

This is a mole which looks different from the moles surrounding it

Common places to develop malignant melanomas in MEN are the back and the chest and in WOMEN it is the legs and arms. Remember, changes can appear anywhere including areas not exposed to the sun.

Non-melanoma skin cancer

Non-melanoma skin cancer develops in the upper layers of the skin. It is one of the most common types of cancer in the world. There are two main types of this cancer known as squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) and basal cell carcinoma (BCC). SCC is fast growing while BCC develops slowly. If you notice any of the below changes to your skin you should discuss it with a doctor.

Squamous cell carcinoma



Basal cell carcinoma



Non-melanoma skin cancer may first appear as:

- A new, unexplained skin change which appears suddenly.
- A spot or sore which does not heal within 4 weeks.
- A spot or sore which continues to itch, hurt, scab, crust or bleed for more than 4 weeks.
- Ulcerated areas or patches where the skin has broken down and does not heal within 4 weeks.

Anyone can develop skin cancer but you are particularly at risk if you have:
Fair skin, lots of moles or freckles, red or fair hair, pale coloured eyes, used tanning beds, a family history of skin cancer or had skin cancer before, or if you take medication which affects your immune system.

Reduce your skin cancer risk - look after your skin

The main cause of all types of skin cancer is ultraviolet (UV) light which comes from the sun or tanning beds.

How to prevent sunburn

- Always use suncream with a minimum SPF 15 which also contains good UVA protection (the more stars the better). Check the expiry date.
- Stay in the shade between 11am – 3pm and wear a hat, t-shirt and sunglasses when you are in the sun.
- Teach your children to look after their skin. Keep babies under the age of 12 months out of the sun and protect older children.
- Apply suncream 30 minutes before going out in the sun and then every two hours.
- If you work outdoors you are particularly at risk.
- NEVER use tanning beds as they damage DNA!

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