

Where can skin cancer start?

Skin cancer often affects areas that catch the most sun such as the head, neck, shoulders or arms.

The most common areas for melanoma are the leg in women, and the chest and back in men. But melanoma can grow anywhere, even in places which are rarely exposed to sunlight, such as the sole of your foot, or your bottom.

Does skin cancer spread?

Melanoma and some other skin cancers can spread to other parts of the body if left untreated. Some skin cancers spread more quickly than others. It is essential to see your doctor as soon as you notice any changes. If it is skin cancer, getting it diagnosed and treated early can make a real difference.

What will happen at the doctor's?

If your doctor has any concerns you will be referred to a hospital specialist. They will examine your skin. If your specialist thinks you might have skin cancer they will remove the abnormal area in a simple operation under local anaesthetic. They then look at the cells under a microscope. If it is skin cancer, you may need more treatment and will be invited to attend regular check-ups.

Further information

For more about skin cancer prevention, please see our 'Be SunSmart' leaflet or visit Cancer Research UK's SunSmart website sunsmart.org.uk

For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit spotcancerearly.com

For more about cancer visit our patient information website cruk.org/cancer-help

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone **0808 800 4040**.

Our health messages are based on scientific evidence. Find out more at cruk.org/health

All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at cruk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK

CRUK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we're all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. Sooner or later we will beat cancer, let's make it sooner. If you would like to support our work, please call **0300 123 1861** or visit our website cruk.org

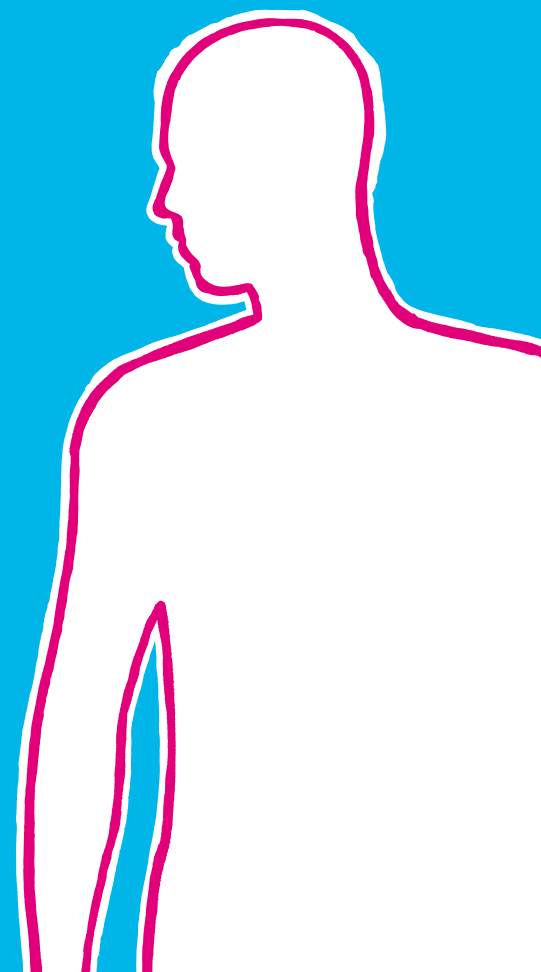
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SKIN CANCER

How to spot the symptoms

cruk.org



Skin cancer facts

The main cause of skin cancer is too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or sunbeds.

Finding skin cancer early saves lives, so it is very important to know the signs and see your doctor about any unusual or persistent changes to your skin. Most changes are not caused by cancer, but it's important to get them checked out by a doctor.

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In this leaflet you can find out about skin cancer and signs to look out for.

There are two main types of skin cancer:

Non-melanoma skin cancer, which is very common, and malignant melanoma which is less common but more serious. Malignant melanoma is often just called 'melanoma'. Around 35 people are diagnosed with melanoma every day in the UK. And rates have more than quadrupled over the last thirty years in Britain.

Most of the information in this leaflet is about melanoma. The leaflet also provides information about other less serious types of skin cancer, which still need treatment.

Who is most at risk?

Anyone can develop skin cancer, but some people are more likely to than others. People with fair skin, red or fair hair, lots of moles or freckles, light-coloured eyes, a personal or family history of skin cancer and/or a history of sunburn are most at risk of melanoma.

More than a third of melanomas in the UK are in people under 55, and skin cancer is the second most common cancer in people aged 15–34. But still, like most cancers, the risk of developing skin cancer increases as you get older.

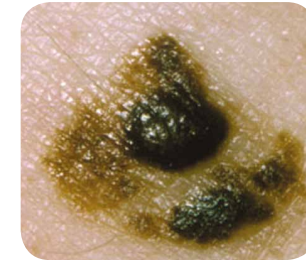
What are the signs of skin cancer?

You may have some moles or dark patches on your skin that are flat or slightly raised. Usually these will remain harmless all your life. Show your doctor any new moles, or any moles, freckles or patches of normal skin that change in size, shape or colour over weeks or months.

Get to know what your skin normally looks like and keep an eye out for any changes.

The ABCD rule

The ABCD rule can help you remember some of the changes to look out for:



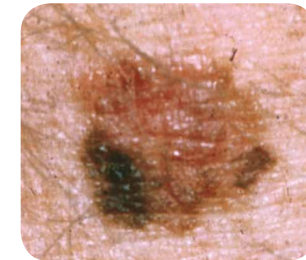
Asymmetry

The two halves of a melanoma may not look the same



Border

Edges of a melanoma may be irregular, blurred or jagged



Colour

The colour of a melanoma may be uneven, with more than one shade



Diameter

Many melanomas are at least 6mm in diameter, the size of a pencil eraser

Other signs of skin cancer

- a new growth or sore that will not heal
- a spot, mole or sore that itches or hurts
- a mole or growth that bleeds, crusts or scabs.

If you notice any of these changes, get them checked out by a doctor.