



BE SKIN CANCER AWARE

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO BE SKIN CANCER AWARE?

Skin cancer is a growing concern in the UK. Melanoma skin cancer is the fifth most common cancer in the UK* and incidents have increased drastically in the last decade. The popularity of sunbeds and lack of sun protection when exposed to the sun are two of the main reasons for the rise.

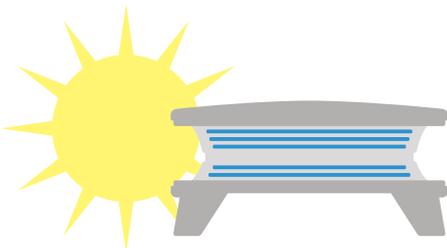
Skin Cancer is a disease that can affect any of us. In fact, 1 in 54 people will be diagnosed with malignant melanoma during their lifetime.* If you fail to protect your skin from UV radiation caused by the sun or sunbeds, you are putting yourself at risk and there is a misconception that sunbeds offer a 'healthy tan'.

WHAT CAUSES SKIN CANCER?

The main cause of skin cancer is over exposure to UV radiation; 90% of melanoma cases in men and 82% of cases in women are linked to exposure to sunlight and sunbed use.* When your skin is exposed to UV radiation, it produces melanin and appears to be tanned. This is your body's way to protect itself against further damage from UV rays. Allowing your skin to become red or burn can dramatically increase your risk. The simple fact of sitting around under strong sunshine without wearing sunscreen can be enough to get sun burnt and damage your skin.

Being skin cancer aware means knowing what your skin looks like normally and being able to spot any changes to your skin is essential for early detection. When skin cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, the prognosis and recovery are generally very positive.

Our skin cancer specialists have put together this guide to help you understand more about skin cancer and what you can do to help prevent it.



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* Cancer Research UK, available online on www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/skin-cancer#heading-Zero. Accessed May 2017.

WHAT IS SKIN CANCER?

Skin Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in the skin. It occurs when damaged cells trigger mutations, or genetic defects that lead cells to multiply and form malignant tumours. Depending on the type of skin cancer, it can start at the surface level of the skin, grow deeper and spread to other parts of the body.

The symptoms of skin cancer may be similar to symptoms of other skin conditions. If you are concerned, it is best to get any symptoms checked by your GP. They may refer you to a consultant dermatologist if further advice or investigation is required.

Find out more today

For more information on skin cancer awareness or skin cancer services call **0800157 7747** or visit

bmihealthcare.co.uk/health-matters/health-and-wellbeing/skin-cancer

TYPES OF SKIN CANCER

The most common 2 types of skin cancer are:

■ **Non melanoma:** this cancer develops from the cells found in the epidermis. Its appearance can vary from being a smooth or scaly lump to a flat, scarred looking patch. It most commonly appears on sun exposed areas, such as head, neck, face, shoulders, arms or legs, but it can start anywhere on the body. The most common types are:

Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common form of skin cancer, if identified early it can be treated fairly easily by surgical excision. Lesions will often bleed and scab, then bleed then scab again, without healing properly. It may appear as a pearl-coloured lump or as a slightly scaly area that is shiny and pale or bright pink in colour. It could be itchy.

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) typically appears on the face, ears, lips, mouth and hands. It often grows like a lump and it can be tender to touch, although it can be a symptomless growing lesion that enlarges. It can look dry and flaky, it can make the skin raised in the area of the cancer, and it may have a hard, crusty scab.

■ **Melanoma:** it is a serious and aggressive type of skin cancer. Melanomas are derived from melanocytes; the cells that produce melanin, which is why melanoma is usually brown or black in colour and can have quite an irregular outline and colour. It can appear on any part of the skin, but is most common on legs for women and back for men. Melanoma can be surprisingly symptomless and usually presents itself as a new mole that grows or a pre-existing mole that changes size, shape or colour.

The earlier melanoma is diagnosed, the higher the chances of a successful treatment. If left untreated, melanoma can spread quickly to other parts of the body via the lymphatic system.



WHAT ARE THE COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SKIN CANCER?

Although not all spots and moles that appear on the skin are cancerous. Some moles, freckles and sunspots are warning signs the skin has had too much sun exposure, increasing the risk of skin cancer. The signs and symptoms of melanoma or non-melanoma cancer include:

1

A spot that is different from other spots on your skin

2

A spot or mole that has changed in appearance, size, shape, colour or texture (Use the ABCDE checklist)

3

A lesion that bleeds and doesn't heal

4

A lump that grows unusually, bleeds or scabs

ABCDE CHECKLIST

The ABCDE of melanoma checklist will help you to remember what signs to look for when checking your skin:

A = Asymmetrical: when half of the mole does not match the other half

B = Border: when the border of the mole is notched or ranged

C = Colour: when the colour of the mole is a mix of two or more colours

D = Diameter: if the diameter of the mole is larger than 6mm

E = Elevation: if the mole becomes raised



KNOW THE FACTS!*

119%

Melanoma skin cancer incidence rates have increased by 119% in the UK since the early 1990s.

4%

Melanoma skin cancer is the fifth most common cancer in the UK (2014), accounting for 4% of all new cases.

86%

Of malignant melanoma skin cancer cases are associated with lifestyle and other risk factors.

5th

In females in the UK, melanoma skin cancer is the fifth most common cancer.

6th

In males in the UK, melanoma skin cancer is the sixth most common cancer.

50%

Around 50% of melanoma skin cancer cases in the UK each year are diagnosed in people aged 65 and over (2012-2014).

2/3

Around two-thirds of malignant melanoma cases are diagnosed at the earliest stage.

1 in 10

Around 1 in 10 melanoma skin cancer cases are diagnosed at a late stage (2012-2013).

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHECKING YOUR OWN SKIN

Check yourself every couple of months, lookout for any changes even on parts of the body not normally exposed to the sun. If you notice something unusual, it doesn't mean you have skin cancer. It means you need to get medical advice to put your mind at rest and get the correct diagnosis.

It can be frightening to think about skin cancer, but to ignore it can be deadly. Skin cancer is a common disease and it can be successfully treated. That is why self-examination is so important. It is recommended to check your skin from head-to-toe thoroughly every couple of months.

HOW TO CHECK YOUR SKIN

Regular self-examination will allow you to learn what is normal to you so you can easily identify any changes.

If you're not sure on how to best check your skin, here are some tips:

- Make sure you are in a room with plenty of light
- Use a full-length mirror which will allow you to see your whole body (it is ideal after a shower whilst you are undressed)
- Start with your face, ears and neck
- Check your entire body (front and back) and raise your arms to check both left and right sides
- Remember to check fingernails, palms and hands
- Check your feet, toenails, in between your toes and soles
- Please don't forget to check your scalp; you can do it with a comb or ask someone who can easily check it for you.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS I SHOULD BE AWARE OF?

There are many factors which may increase your risk of developing skin cancer, many of which could be avoided. The risk factors include:



Family history – if you have an immediate family member who has had skin cancer, you are twice as likely to develop skin cancer.



Your skin type – you have pale or fair skin, especially if it burns easily, prone to freckles and doesn't tan.



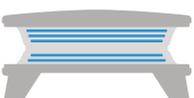
Moles – you have lots of moles or freckles.



Tanning – you use sunbeds or sunbath outside.



Outdoor – you do outdoor sport or work outdoors.



Sunbeds – if you are a regular sunbed user.

Those with pale skin and those who have had a lot of sun exposure or used sunbeds are most at risk. However, anyone can develop skin cancer, no matter how dark your skin is or how easily you tan, we are all at risk.

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT SKIN CANCER?

- Sunscreen: Use a high sun protection factor (SPF) rating to block ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation
- Cover up when in the sun: Wear a hat, sunglasses and long sleeves
- Avoid the use of sunbeds
- Avoid sun exposure between 11am to 3pm



SKIN CANCER SERVICES

At BMI Healthcare we have 59 private hospitals and clinics across the country, many offering skin cancer services including:

- **Mole mapping** it is a non-invasive surveillance programme catalogues and tracks your moles over time, making it possible to identify any changes in pre-existing or new moles which could potentially lead to skin cancer. The process of mole mapping uses computer assisted photography to take a collection of images of your skin's surface to generate a complete body mole map.
- **Specialist-led, fast access skin cancer services** for patients who are concerned or present signs or symptoms. An appointment with the consultant dermatologist of your choice is usually available within 48 hours so you can get the fast investigation you need and put your mind at rest.

Our hospitals and clinics are suitable for patients with private medical insurance or those paying for themselves. If using private medical insurance, please check with your insurance provider to ensure you are covered by your insurance policy.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I DISCOVER A SYMPTOM?

If you notice any signs associated with skin cancer, it doesn't mean you have skin cancer. However if you are concerned you should visit your GP right away who will assess you and refer you onto a specialist dermatologist for further investigation if required.

[Find out more today](#)

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[bmihealthcare.co.uk/health-matters/health-and-wellbeing/skin-cancer](https://www.bmihealthcare.co.uk/health-matters/health-and-wellbeing/skin-cancer)