



### 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.

Any change in a mole, freckle or normal patch of skin that occurs quickly, over weeks or months, is worth getting checked out.

### Where can skin cancer start?

The most common sites for melanoma are the leg in women, the back in men and the face in older people. But a melanoma can grow anywhere, sometimes on the sole of your foot, or on your bottom.

Other types of skin cancer often affect areas that catch the most sun such as the head, neck, shoulders or arms.

### Does skin cancer spread?

Melanoma and some other skin cancers will 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.

### What will happen at the doctor's?

If your doctor has any concerns you will be referred to a hospital specialist. If your specialist thinks you might have skin cancer it will be removed in a simple operation under local anaesthetic. The skin will then be examined. If it is skin cancer you may be given treatment and invited to attend regular check-ups.

### Further information

For more about skin cancer prevention, please see our 'Being SunSmart' leaflet or visit Cancer Research UK's SunSmart website [www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit [www.spotcancerearly.com](http://www.spotcancerearly.com)

For more about cancer visit our patient information website [www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)

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 [www.cancerresearchuk.org/health](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health)

All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed externally by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at [www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets)

### About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK is the world's leading charity dedicated to research into the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. If you would like to support our work, please call **020 7121 6699** or visit our website [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

*Together we will beat cancer*

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Due for review by: April 2013.  
Registered charity in England and Wales  
(1089464) and Scotland (SC041666).



# Detecting skin cancer

## spot the symptoms early





## Skin cancer facts

Skin cancer is very common in the UK. Finding skin cancer early saves lives, so it is very important to know the signs.

Skin cancer often first appears as a change in a mole or a patch of normal skin. If you notice a change that happens over weeks or months you should act without delay. Most changes are not caused by cancer, but do need to be checked out by a doctor.

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. Some people also use 'melanoma' to mean malignant melanoma.

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.

## What causes skin cancer?

The main cause of skin cancer is too much ultra violet radiation (UVR), from the sun or sunbeds.

## Who is most at risk?

Everyone should check their skin for changes but some people are more likely than others to develop skin cancer. People with fair skin, lots of moles or freckles, or a family history of skin cancer are most at risk.

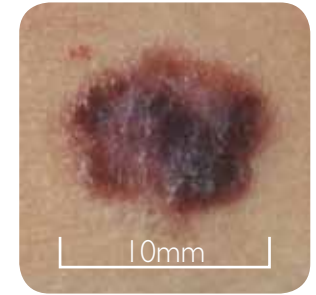
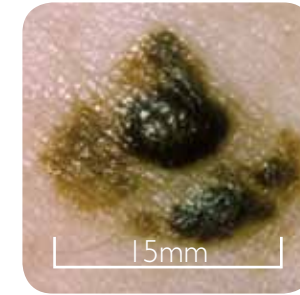
Skin cancer is the second most common cancer in young people (age 15–34). But the risk of developing the disease still increases with age.

## 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 moles or patches of normal skin that change in size, shape or colour over weeks or months.

Check your skin regularly for changes. This is especially important if you are fair skinned with lots of moles or freckles. The ABCD rule can help you remember what to look out for. If you notice any of the ABCD signs, see your doctor without delay.

## The ABCD rule

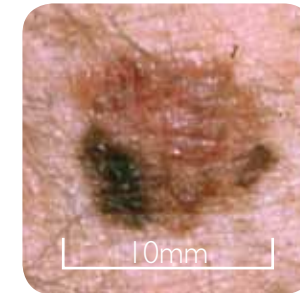


### Asymmetry

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