



SKIN CANCER

Skin Cancer is the second most common cancer in Britain today.

Fortunately, most are completely curable forms of skin cancer and very few turn out to be a serious disease.

Fact 1:
There are two main groups of skin cancer.

Skin cancer can be divided into two main groups:

- 1) Malignant melanoma
- 2) Non-melanoma skin cancer

Malignant melanoma

Malignant melanoma is not as common as Basal Cell and Squamous Cell Carcinoma but it is treated with respect as it has the potential to spread to other sites or organs within the body. Malignant Melanoma affects the other pigment-producing cells (melanocytes) found in the skin and can appear as a new mole, or in an existing mole on the skin. Remember, malignant melanoma is **CURABLE** if treated early, but more difficult to cure if spread to other areas has occurred.



Non-melanoma skin cancers

(Basal cell carcinoma and Squamous cell carcinoma)

Non-melanoma skin cancers are far more common than malignant melanoma and in the case of basal cell carcinoma rarely spread to other sites. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma occur more frequently on skin after many years of exposure. This exposure also causes premature ageing of the skin. Non-malignant skin cancers, if caught early, are easily treated by minor surgery. If left, non-melanoma skin cancers will grow and disfigure - **therefore early treatment is recommended.**

Basal Cell Carcinoma



Squamous Cell Carcinoma



Fact 2:
**Sunshine is the single most important causative factor
for all skin cancers.**

Ultra-violet rays contained in sunshine are known to be harmful and can cause skin cancers. The increase in skin cancers in Britain has been linked with the desire to have a tan, with repeated sunburn, fair skin types and genetic factors, such as number of moles.

Malignant melanoma is associated with intermittent high intensity sun exposure. Whereas non-melanoma skin cancers are caused by long-term sun exposure. The amount of sun exposure during childhood and frequency of sunburn are now believed to increase the risk of developing skin cancers in adult life. It is therefore most important to protect all children from intense sunshine. Hats, T-shirts and sunscreens are recommended at home, at school and on holiday.

Fact 3:

All white-skinned people are at risk of developing skin cancer.

People with very fair skin are most at risk of developing skin cancer. Those who cannot develop a tan are most at risk of malignant melanoma, but everyone is at risk of being sunburnt, especially indoor employees, children and babies. Malignant melanoma is twice as common in females as it is in males. Non-melanoma skin cancers are most frequently seen in older age groups and outdoor workers who have a continuous all-year tan. The incidence of skin cancer is rapidly rising in the young adult population.

Fact 4:

Skin cancers are mostly curable if treated in the early stages.

The majority of malignant melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers are curable if treated in the early stages. A minor surgical procedure is all that is usually required to remove cancers of the skin. Regular inspection of skin and moles at home helps in recognising any abnormal skin lesions or changing moles. Change in size, shape and colour of a mole are the early warning signs of malignant melanoma. **Always see your doctor for advise on any sore, which does not heal, or changing/troublesome mole on the skin.**

**If in doubt - check it out
Seek medical advice**



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Other information leaflets on skin cancer available from the Wessex Cancer Trust:

- No. 17: Living with Melanoma
- No. 27: Squamous Cell Carcinoma
- No. 28: Basal Cell Carcinoma
- No. 29: Malignant Melanoma

WESSEX CANCER TRUST

The Wessex Cancer Trust supports many aspects of cancer care for adults and children, including research, counselling, the production of cancer prevention/patient information leaflets, the appointment of breast care nurses, the improvement of patient facilities, the purchase of equipment and the provision of mobile breast screening units, as well as financial help for cancer patients and their families.

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We depend upon voluntary contributions to maintain our cancer information service for patients and the public. We need your help to help others; and would welcome your financial support.

WESSEX CANCER TRUST

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