



DID YOU KNOW?

- Cancer is a disease of the body's cells which causes cells to grow in an uncontrolled manner, forming a mass of cells known as a tumour.
- The skin can be damaged by unprotected exposure to UV radiation (from the sun and/or from other sources such as solariums). This damage can accumulate and lead to skin cancer.
- Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world, with one in two people who spend their lives in Australia developing skin cancer.
- Every day, two people aged 55 and over die from melanoma in Australia.

WHAT IS SKIN CANCER?

There are three main types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and Melanoma. BCCs and SCCs are the most common of the three. Skin cancers are named after the type of cell they develop in, and each type has different features. BCC's are slow growing, and most commonly found on the head, neck and upper body. They look like a lump or scaling area, which is red or pearly in colour. They can ulcerate, bleed easily and not heal.

SCC's are most common in people over 50, on parts of the body which are exposed to the sun. They grow quickly over several months, appear as a thickened red, scaly spot which ulcerates and bleeds easily and can spread to other parts of the body if left untreated.

Melanomas are the least common of the three, but the most serious. They appear as a new spot, or an existing spot, freckle or mole that changes in size, shape or colour.

They can be anywhere on the body. They can be more than 1 colour and may have an uneven or smudgy outline or surface. They can itch, bleed or become larger or irregular in shape. If treated early, 95% of melanomas are cured.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Anyone who spent their childhood in Australia, or spends time in the sun, is at risk of developing skin cancer. This risk is also increases with:

- * Age
- * A large number of moles
- * If you have suffered sunburn in the past
- * If you have fair skin that burns easily, freckles and does not tan
- * If you have blue or green eyes and/or fair or red hair
- * If you have been diagnosed with a skin cancer in the past
- * If you have a family history of skin cancer
- * If you have a compromised immune system

WHO NEEDS TO CHECK THEIR SKIN?

Australians of all ages would benefit from regularly checking their skin for any new or existing spots, moles or freckles which change colour, shape or size. The risk of developing skin cancer also increases with age, meaning people aged 55 years and over should examine their skin regularly.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU CHECK?

You should check your skin yourself approximately once every 3 months. You should also have your skin checked by a doctor on an annual basis. However, if you notice any changes in your skin you should come in sooner.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT SKIN CANCER?

The best way to prevent skin cancer is to protect your skin from the sun.

You can do this by:

- ✓ Staying out of the sun between 11am and 3pm, when the UV radiation from the sun is strongest
- ✓ Using shade from trees, umbrellas, buildings or canopies when outdoors
- ✓ Wearing clothing that covers as much of the skin as possible—for example, a long-sleeved shirt with a collar
- ✓ Wearing a broad-brimmed hat
- ✓ Using sunscreen with SPF of 30+ and is broad spectrum and water resistant—reapply every 2 hours or after swimming or sweating
- ✓ Wearing sunglasses

SUNLIGHT AND HEALTH

Some sunlight is important for your health as Vitamin D, which maintains strong and healthy bones, is formed in the body when the skin is exposed to UV radiation.

However you only need to be in the sun for about 10 minutes on most days (before 11am and after 3pm) to produce enough Vitamin D for good health.

Source: The Cancer Council NSW

For information about all our services and our doctors, please visit
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