

## Other signs of skin cancer

- a new growth or sore that won't 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, should be taken seriously.

## 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 these 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.

## Who is most at risk?

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

## Further information

Visit Cancer Research UK's SunSmart website [www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

For more about cancer visit our patient information website [www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk) click on 'specific cancers' then 'melanoma skin cancer' or 'skin cancer (not melanoma)'.

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our **information nurses**. Direct line **020 7061 8355** or freephone **0800 CANCER**, that is **0800 226 237**

For more about how to be SunSmart, please see our 'Preventing skin cancer' leaflet. Order copies of this and other cancer awareness leaflets online at [www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets) email [publications@cancer.org.uk](mailto:publications@cancer.org.uk) or call **020 7061 8333**

## About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK is the leading charity dedicated to research on the causes, treatment and prevention 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)  
[www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)



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# detecting skin cancer

how to spot the changes 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.

The most serious type of skin cancer is called malignant melanoma also known as melanoma. Other types of skin cancer are called non-melanoma. Non-melanomas are by far the most common skin cancers.

Most of the information in this leaflet is about melanoma. When found early and treated quickly, this serious disease can be cured. The leaflet also provides information about other types of skin cancer. They are much less dangerous than melanoma but still need early treatment.

## What causes skin cancer?

The main cause of skin cancer is too much sun. Sunburn can double the risk of skin cancer. Lots of sun over your lifetime also increases your risk of certain skin cancers.

## 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 the foot, or on the buttocks.

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

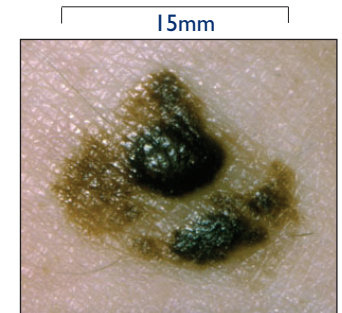
## What are the signs of skin cancer?

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.

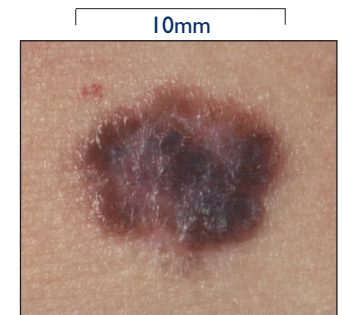
Check your skin regularly for changes. This is especially important if you are fair skinned with lots of moles or freckles. The ABCD rule can help you remember what to look out for. If you notice any of the ABCD signs, **see your doctor without delay.**

## The ABCD rule

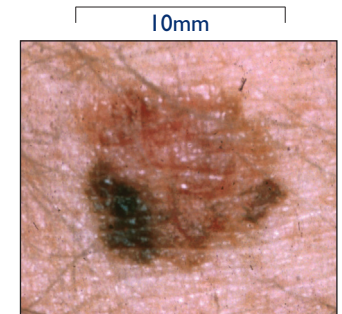
**Asymmetry**  
The two halves of a melanoma may not look the same



**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

