



## Skin cancer

### What happens to the skin in the sun?

Ultraviolet radiation from the sun causes changes to take place in the structure of cells. Many years of exposure to sunlight will permanently damage the skin and the damage will worsen as long as the skin is exposed to the sun.

Over 20-40 years many blotches, blemishes and brown age spots may appear. These can often be seen on the face, neck, backs of hands and arms and the "V" of the neck. The skin loses elasticity, becomes loose and wrinkled. UV radiation can cause skin cancer to develop.

### What is Skin Cancer?

Skin cancer is an uncontrolled growth or spread of abnormal cells in the skin

### Facts

- Skin cancers account for around 81% of all new cancers diagnosed each year in Australia.
- Over 382,000 people are treated for non-melanoma skin cancer and melanoma each year in Australia, and over 1400 die.
- Every year, doctors remove around 720,000 lesions from the skins of Australians because they are suspected skin cancers
- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in young people.

### There are 3 main types of skin cancer

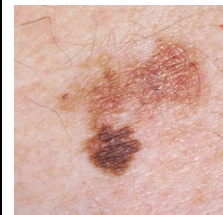
- Basal cell carcinoma (most common)
- Squamous cell carcinoma (most common)
- Malignant melanoma (**most dangerous** form)

### Malignant melanoma

- Most dangerous skin cancer
- Usually starts in the skins epidermis (outer layer of skin).
- It can start in a freckle or mole, but more often, it starts in normal looking skin
- Melanomas tend to spread within the epidermis before they move into the deeper layer of skin, the dermis
- If treatment is not undertaken, cancer cells may break away and be carried to other parts of the body

### What does melanoma look like?

- Melanoma looks like an unusual freckle with an irregular or smudgy edge.
- It may have a variety of colours including brown, black, blue, red and occasionally light grey.
- The first sign of a melanoma is usually the appearance of a new spot on normal skin or a change in a freckle or mole.
- In the early stages a melanoma is normally flat, but it may become raised as it grows.
- The change may be in shape, size and/or colour, and this is normally seen over several weeks or months as it grows.



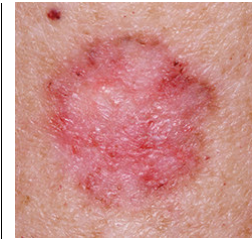
# skin Cancer

Slip, Slop, Slap



## Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)

- Most common but least dangerous type of skin cancer
- Around 70-80% of skin cancers in Australia are BCC
- They grow slowly over months or years and very rarely spread to other parts of the body
- May look like a red scaly patch of skin
- If not treated they may form an ulcer
- Occur in sun exposed areas
- Most common in people over 40, but can occur in younger adults



## Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)

- Around 15-25% of skin cancers are SCC's
- Less common than BCC but grow faster, usually over a period of weeks to months
- Occur on areas exposed to the most sunlight
- May look like red scaly spot or lump and may be tender to touch
- Can occur before 40 years of age
- Often develops from solar keratoses (sunspots)



## Reducing the risk

### **Be sun smart all year round to reduce your risk of skin cancer**

- Avoid the sun in the middle of the day.
- Use full shade when ever possible.
- Wear a broad brimmed hat at least 7.5 cm.
- Baseball caps do not provide adequate protection to the side of the face, ears and neck.
- Wear protective clothing- long trousers, long sleeve shirts, non reflective, allow good ventilation.
- Use very high protection, SPF 30+, broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen.
- Layer sunscreen on 20 mins before going outside and reapply every 2 hours, do not rub it in.
- Protect lips with a lip balm or stick which a high SPF.
- Wear close fitting sunglasses.
- Sunglasses and hat worn together can reduce eye exposure when working around reflective surfaces.
- Get your skin checked regularly

## Who is at risk to skin cancer?

- Over 270 000 Australians are treated for non melanoma skin cancer each year-the highest rate in the world
- Major cause is too much exposure to UV radiation from sunlight
- Everyone is at risk of developing skin cancer
- Those people with fair skin, red or blonde hair and blue or green eyes, who freckle easily, are at greater risk

## Diagnosis

- If your doctor suspects you have a non-melanoma skin cancer they may take a biopsy to make a definite diagnosis
- Requires a removal of a small part of the skin that is sent off for examination

**Skin cancer is PREVENTABLE!**

**But it is up to YOU to do something about it!**