

Spot skin cancer early



CANCER
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UK

Together we will beat cancer

Take charge

If you want to know more about **spotting the signs of skin cancer**, this leaflet is for you.

You'll learn:

- what to look out for
- tips for telling your doctor if something's not quite right
- ways to reduce your risk

When it comes to your health, remember you're in charge.

Listen to your body


There's no need to do regular skin checks, but if something doesn't look or feel quite right, don't ignore it.

It could be a new mark or mole on your skin or nail, or one that has been there for a while and changed. It could be sore, itchy, bleeding or crusty.

Use 'ABCDE' to remember what mole changes to look out for. Tell your doctor if you notice even one of them:

A  **Asymmetry** – The two halves of your mole don't look the same

B  **Border** – Might be irregular, blurred or jagged

C  **Colour** – May be uneven with different colours, or be different from other moles

D  **Diameter** – Might be the width of a pencil (6mm or more), and could be getting bigger or changing shape

E  **Evolving** – Anything that changes over time

Cancer is much more common in people over 50, but it can affect anyone of any age. If something's unusual or won't go away, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer – but if it is, finding it at an early stage can make a real difference.



Cut your risk

We all need a bit of sun. But too much ultraviolet radiation from the sun (or sunbeds) is the main cause of skin cancer, and getting sunburnt increases your risk.

In the UK, the sun's UV rays are strongest between 11am and 3pm, from mid-March to mid-October.

When the sun is strong:



Enjoy the cool of the shade



Cover up with a hat, t-shirt and sunglasses



On the parts you can't cover, use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and 4 or 5 stars

And remember to avoid sunbeds – using them increases the risk of skin cancer.

Your risk might be higher if you have been sunburnt several times. But it's never too late to start being sun safe!

Does skin tone affect my risk?

If you have light skin, light coloured eyes, or light or red hair, you're at higher risk. People with lots of moles or freckles, or skin that burns easily, are also at higher risk.

People with darker skin tones can get skin cancer too – it might affect different places like the palms of the hands or soles of the feet. Sunburn can feel different for people with darker skin, it may be irritated, tender or itchy.

Talk to your doctor

When you're worried that there's something wrong, telling a doctor can seem difficult.

Here are some ideas for how to get the most out of your appointment, whether it's via phone, video or a face to face conversation.



Be honest. Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem that important or you think it might be a bit embarrassing.



Be thorough. Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or another health condition. If it's something that's bothering you, then your doctor will want to hear about it.



Stick with it. Don't worry you might be wasting your doctor's time. Even if you've spoken to them already, they want to know if your symptoms haven't gone away, or if something still doesn't feel quite right.



Be prepared. Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say can help. It can also be useful to have a list of any medications that you take, including over-the-counter or herbal remedies.

How to find out more

We're online...



Find out more about spotting cancer early, including information about cancer screening across the UK, at cruk.org/spotcancerearly

...and on the phone



Our Nurse Helpline is there if you're looking for information or support. Just call **0808 800 4040**.

If you'd like to provide any feedback on this leaflet or would like to know more about the information sources used in creating it, please email publications@cancer.org.uk

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support what we're doing, you can call **0300 123 1022**.