



## SKIN CANCER

Skin Cancer is the second most common cancer in Britain today. Latest statistics state that over 60,000 new cases of skin cancer are reported each year.

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



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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

**For telephone help and advice on skin cancers ring**

**Wessex Cancer Trust MARC'S LINE**

**(Melanoma and Related Cancers of the Skin)**

**Tel: 01722 415071.**

## **WESSEX CANCER TRUST**

The Wessex Cancer Trust supports many aspects of cancer care for adults and children, including research, education, the production of cancer prevention/patient information leaflets, the improvement of patient facilities, the purchase of equipment and financial help for cancer patients and their families, as well as providing a free counselling and complementary service to cancer patients and their carers and 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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**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 the most rare form of skin cancer but is also the most serious. It affects the pigment-producing cells (melanocytes) found in the skin and can appear as a new mole, or arises from an existing mole on the skin.

Malignant melanoma has the potential to spread to other sites or organs within the body. Malignant melanoma is **CURABLE** if treated early, but more difficult to cure if spread has occurred.



### **Non-melanoma skin cancers**

(Basal cell carcinoma and Squamous cell carcinoma)

Non-melanoma skin cancers are far more common, but less dangerous than malignant melanoma and very rarely fatal. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma frequently appear on the sun-exposed skin after many years of exposure. This exposure also causes premature ageing of the skin. Non-malignant skin cancers 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 frequent high intensity sun exposure. Whereas non-melanoma skin cancers are caused by long-term exposure to low intensity sunshine. 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:  
All skin cancers are curable if treated in the early stages.**

Both 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.**

Pre-cancerous skin lesions such as Bowen's Disease and Actinic Keratoses are harmless - although, if left untreated, a small percentage will develop into non-melanoma skin cancers.

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