



CANCER  
RESEARCH  
UK

Together we will beat cancer

# Spot skin cancer early

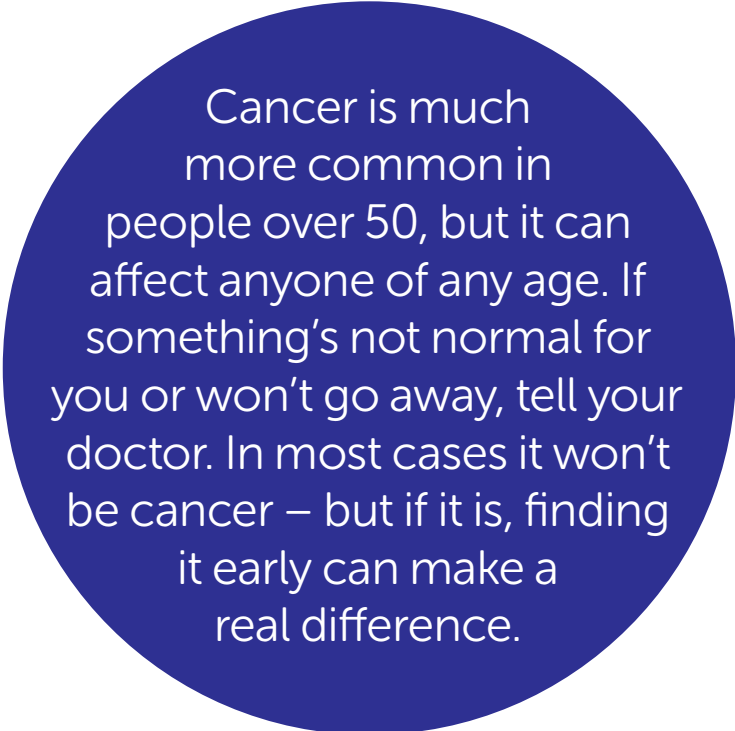


# Take charge

Whether you've heard about it from a friend or family member, seen it in the news, or are just curious: if you want to know more about spotting melanoma skin cancer, this leaflet is for you.

You'll find out what to look out for, tips for telling your doctor if something's not quite right, and ways to reduce your risk.

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



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

# 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.

Whether it's a mark or mole that's new, has changed or been there for a while, tell your doctor if you notice any of these:

- A change in a patch of skin or a nail
- A new growth or sore that won't heal
- A spot, mole or sore that itches or hurts
- A mole or growth that bleeds, oozes, crusts or scabs
- Any other changes that aren't normal for you

'ABCDE' helps us remember mole changes to look out for. Tell your doctor if you notice **even one of them**.


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


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

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

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

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

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# Cut your risk

We all need a bit of sun. But too much ultraviolet (UV) 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 early April to late September.

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 SPF15 and 4 or 5 stars

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

## 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

Talking to your doctor isn't always easy. Here are our tips to get the most out of your appointment:



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**Be honest.** Tell your doctor about anything that's not normal for you, even if it doesn't seem that important.



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**Be thorough.** Don't put symptoms down to 'just getting older' – mention them to your doctor.



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**Stick with it.** Don't worry about wasting your doctor's time. Even if you've been to see them already, if your symptoms haven't gone away, they will want to know. If it's an area you can easily reach – taking a photo with a ruler next to it might help to show the change.



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**Be prepared.** Have a think about the changes, and roughly how long you've had them for. Writing down the things you want to say can help. And you can always bring a trusted friend or family member with you for support.

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# Early diagnosis saves lives

Remember, when skin cancer is spotted early, treatment is more likely to be successful. Thanks to research, treatments are kinder and more effective than ever.



## We're online...

Learn more about spotting cancer early, including information about screening across the UK, at [cruk.org/spotcancerearly](https://cruk.org/spotcancerearly)

Find out more about sun, UV and ways to enjoy the sun safely at [www.cruk.org/sun](https://www.cruk.org/sun)

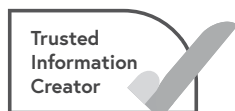


## ...and on the phone

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

To provide any feedback on this leaflet or if you would like to know more about the sources used to create it, call **020 3469 8333** or email [publications@cancer.org.uk](mailto:publications@cancer.org.uk)

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support us call **0300 123 1022**.



Patient Information Forum

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