

The facts on Skin Cancer

There are several types of skin cancer which are divided into two main groups:

- **Malignant Melanoma Skin Cancer (melanoma).** This is an aggressive type of cancer that can rapidly spread to other body systems and be fatal. It often starts with a change in a mole or a new growth on normal skin. It is associated with intermittent sun exposure and a history of sunburning.
- **Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer.** These are usually not fatal but may be very disfiguring. They are most often found on areas of the body regularly exposed to sunlight and most cases are associated with lifelong over-exposure to the sun.

Demographics

About 2,500 people in Northern Ireland develop skin cancer each year of these around 182 are malignant melanoma. Melanoma shows much higher rates for females, with over 2 more appearing in the female population. Melanoma is most common between the ages of 40 - 60 years but a significant number of cases occur in people under 35. Each year skin cancers kill around 55 people in Northern Ireland.

What should I do?

Avoid over exposure to Ultraviolet Radiation (UVR) either from natural sunlight or from artificial sources such as sunbeds as this is the main cause of 80% of skin cancers.

Pay particular attention the following risk factors:

- Skin type - fair skin which burns easily
- A personal history of having a melanoma
- A family history of melanoma.
- Moles - having a large number of moles (50 - 100) or multiple unusual moles (large, uneven colour or irregular border).
- History of severe sunburn especially in childhood
- Reduced immunity - for example due to an organ transplant.

Check list for moles:

Major Signs

Change in size
Change in shape
Change in colour

See your doctor immediately

Minor Signs

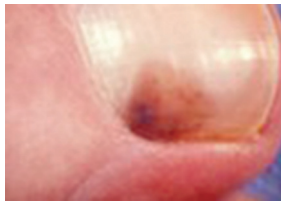
Inflammation
Crusting or bleeding
Sensory change
Diameter over 7mm

If not back to normal within two weeks see your doctor

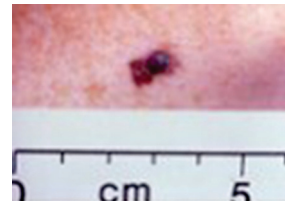
Pictures to help you recognise what is not usual:



Irregular border
Mix of colours
Asymmetrical



Check under toe and
finger nails



Diameter over 7 mm

ALWAYS REMEMBER KNOW YOUR SKIN, KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL FOR YOU

Treatment

Early detection of melanoma saves lives. If you are concerned about a skin lesion see your GP who will refer you to a dermatologist if necessary.

Early melanomas are usually treated successfully. Later stages may require more extensive surgery and cancer treatments.

Prevention

Avoid over exposure to natural and artificial UVR.

Wear a broad-brimmed hat.

Wear clothing that provides skin shade - long sleeves, lightweight tight weave materials.

Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a minimum SPF 15.

Avoid the sun at peak UV times - between 11am and 3pm.

Do not use sunbeds or other artificial UV light sources except under medical supervision.

CHECK YOUR SKIN REGULARLY AND ALWAYS REPORT CHANGES TO YOUR DOCTOR