



# Mole awareness: Non-melanoma and melanoma skin cancer explained

With summer in full swing, many of us will be spending time in the sunshine. Whilst the warmth of the sun can feel good on your skin, it's important to remember that over-exposure to the sun can be dangerous - in fact, over-exposure to the sun is the most common cause of skin cancer.

Skin cancers can look very different and the symptoms vary from person to person, so it can be

difficult to determine whether a change on the skin or to a mole is something more serious.

So, our derma experts have shared what you need to know about different types of skin cancer and the signs and changes to look out for...

## Non-melanoma versus melanoma skin cancer - what you need to know.

### What is non-melanoma skin cancer?

**Non-melanoma skin cancer** most often develops on skin that's been exposed to sun and tends to affect men more than women. Most cases of non-melanoma skin cancer are successfully cured.



### KEY FACTS:

There are nearly **156,000** new cases of non-melanoma skin cancer cases in the UK each year, which equates to nearly 430 every day (2016-2018).

Since the early 1990s, non-melanoma skin cancer incidence rates have increased by **169%** in the UK.

Each year **almost half** of all new non-melanoma skin cancer cases in the UK are diagnosed in people aged 75 and over (2016-2018).

### Signs and symptoms of non-melanoma skin cancer

- 1** A sore that doesn't heal - the sore can look see-through, shiny and pink or pearly white. It can also look red. It may feel sore, rough and have raised edges.
- 2** An ulcer - look out for an area of skin that has broken down (an ulcer) and doesn't heal within 4 weeks, and you can't think of a reason for this change
- 3** A lump - this might be small, slow growing, shiny and pink or red.
- 4** Red patches on your skin - these red patches could also be itchy. This could be due to other non cancerous skin conditions. But get it checked to make sure.
- 5** Freckles or moles - a change to a mole or freckle can be a sign of another type of skin cancer called melanoma.

## What is melanoma skin cancer?

**Melanoma** is a type of skin cancer that can spread to other areas of the body. The main cause of melanoma is UV light from the sun and sunbeds. The chances of getting melanoma increase with age, if you have pale skin, a history of skin cancer in the family or a large number of moles.

## Signs and symptoms of melanoma skin cancer

A new mole or a change in an existing mole may be a sign of melanoma. The ABCDE rule of skin cancer is a simple, easy-to-remember checklist to help determine whether a mole or growth may be cancerous:



**Asymmetrical** - this refers to the shape of the mole. Melanomas are likely to have an uneven shape. The two halves of the area may be different shapes (asymmetrical). Normal moles usually have a more even shape and the two halves are similar (symmetrical).



**Border** - this refers to the edges of the mole. Melanomas are more likely to have irregular edges (border) that might be blurred or jagged. Normal moles usually have a smooth, regular border.



**Colour** - this refers to the colour of the mole. Melanomas are often an uneven colour and contain more than one shade.



## KEY FACTS:

There are **16,000+** new cases of melanoma skin cancer each year (2016-2018 average, UK).

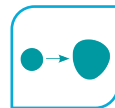
**87%** of people survive melanoma skin cancer for 10 or more years (2013-2017, England).

**87%** of melanoma skin cancer cases are preventable (2015, UK).

The melanoma might have different shades of black, brown and pink. Normal moles usually have an even colour.



**Diameter** - this refers to how wide the mole is. Most melanomas are more than 6mm wide. Normal moles are usually about the size of the end of a pencil or smaller.



**Evolving** - this refers to a changing mole or condition in the skin. Melanomas might change in size, shape or colour. Or you might notice other changes such as a mole bleeding, itching or becoming crusty. Normal moles usually stay the same size, shape, and colour.

## How to enjoy the sun safely

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays are the strongest in the UK between 11am and 3pm from mid-March to mid-October. During this time, the sun may be strong enough to cause damage. Take extra care to protect your skin, especially if you get sunburnt easily:

1. Spend time in the shade, especially between 11am and 3pm in the UK.
2. Cover up with clothes, a wide-brimmed hat and UV protection sunglasses.
3. And use a sunscreen with at least SPF15 and 4 or 5 stars. Use it generously, reapply regularly and use together with shade and clothing\*.

The NHS recommends that children under 6 months should be kept out of direct sunlight.

