

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is a disease of the skin cells. It is caused mainly by overexposure to UV radiation. UV causes the cells to grow abnormally - if your body cannot destroy them naturally, they develop into skin cancer. Skin cancer is almost always preventable. Two in three people in Australia will be diagnosed with some form of skin cancer before the age of 70. Approximately 434,000 people are treated for one or more non-melanoma skin cancers with 450 people dying each year. More than 10,300 people are treated for melanoma with 1,250 people dying each year in Australia.

Types of skin cancer

There are three types of skin cancer.

- **Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)** is the most common type of skin cancer. They are rarely life threatening but should be treated. They look like small red, pale or pearly coloured lumps and may appear like a sore that won't heal. They can be flat and red.
- **Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)** can spread to other parts of your body, and can be fatal if not treated. They can occur more commonly as you age. They start out as pink, flaky lesions but can grow, bleed, become tender and crusted.
- **Melanoma** is the most dangerous type of skin cancer, and it can spread if untreated. It is also the most common type of skin cancer in people aged between 15 and 44 years. Melanoma can occur on parts of your body that are not exposed to the sun (ie soles of feet and between the toes), as well as on parts that are exposed.

Melanoma (continued)

Melanoma appears as a new brownish irregular shaped spot or an existing spot that changes colour, size or shape. Often it will look different to surrounding brown moles. Early melanoma is flat. It very rarely causes pain, bleeds or itches. Nodular melanoma is not common, grows quickly, is firm to touch and is dome shaped. There is also a rare type of melanoma which is pink rather than brown/black.

Who is at risk of skin cancer?

All Australians are at risk due to our geographic location in an area of intense solar radiation. Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. More than 1,700 Australians die from skin cancer each year.

Whilst it is more likely to occur in fair skinned people, all complexions have been known to develop skin cancer. Having two or more episodes of sunburn as a child also increases your risk of skin cancer.



What should I do next?

Keep on being vigilant with slip, slop, slap.

Ensure you follow the advice given by your Ford Health skin check doctor today. You may have been provided with referrals to a specialist or your GP for further treatment, or encouraged to monitor your skin and have another check in 12 months time.

You are at an increased risk of skin cancer if you:

- have not had a skin cancer check in the last 12 months
- have had two or more episodes of sunburn as a child
- often lay out in the sun for long periods of time
- use solariums
- have a family history of melanoma (first degree relative - ie parent or sibling)
- have increased numbers of large, irregularly shaped brown moles (Dysplastic naevi)
- have fair skin, many freckles, pale eye colour and/or fair or red hair
- have a hobby or occupation which means you spend large amounts of time outdoors

How can I reduce my risk of skin cancer?

Important suggestions for reducing your risk of skin cancer include:

- keep out of the sun once the UV Index is greater than 3, especially between 10am and 3pm.
- slip on a shirt with long sleeves, collar and close weave fabric.
- slop on sunscreen. Choose a high SPF, but remember that no sunscreen offers 100% protection.
- slap on a broad brimmed hat.
- wear sunglasses.
- check your skin regularly for signs of change. Any changes should be checked by your GP who may refer you to a specialist.
- have an annual skin cancer check with your medical practitioner.

For more information:

- See your GP
- See your dermatologist
- SunSmart
www.sunsmart.com.au
- Cancer Council of Australia
www.cancer.org.au

