



# Take a good look at yourself.

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. The good news is that 95 per cent of skin cancers can be cured if detected early. Do you know what skin cancer looks like? Turn over to find out....



**Cancer Council**  
Western Australia

# A SIMPLE CHECK COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

We should all check our skin regularly – at the beginning of every new season is an easy way to remember.

People with fair skin, blue or green eyes and/or fair or red hair, lots of moles or freckles and those who suffered sunburn as a child, work outdoors or spend a lot of time in the sun have a higher risk of developing skin cancer and need to take extra care to protect and check their skin.

## SKIN CANCERS

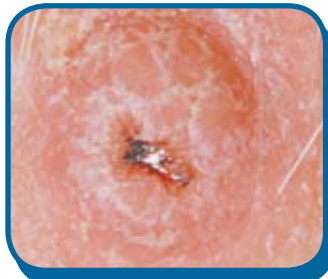
There are three main types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma.

### Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)



- Accounts for about 66 per cent of skin cancers.
- Grows slowly over months or years.
- Look for small, round or flattened spots that are red, pale or pearly in colour. Some are scaly like a patch of eczema.
- May become ulcerated, bleed and fail to heal.
- Usually found on the upper body, head or neck.

### Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)

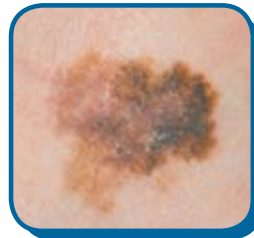


- Accounts for about 33 per cent of skin cancers.
- Grows over months and may spread if not treated.
- Look for scaly red areas that may bleed easily, ulcers or non-healing sores that are often painful, especially when touched.
- Often found on lips, ears, scalp, backs of the hands and lower legs.

### Melanoma

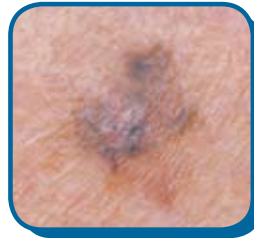
- Accounts for 1 - 2 per cent of skin cancers.
- Is the most dangerous and aggressive form of skin cancer.
- If left untreated can spread to other parts of the body and can be fatal.
- Grows quickly over weeks to months.
- Can appear as a new or existing spot, freckle or mole that changes in colour, size or shape.
- Can grow anywhere on the body not just areas exposed to the sun.
- Occurs most frequently on the upper back in males and on the lower leg in females.

Use the ABCD of melanoma detection to check for the following:



#### Asymmetry

If the spot or lesion is divided in half, the two halves are not a mirror image.



#### Border

A spot with a spreading or irregular edge.



#### Colour

A spot with a number of different colours through it.

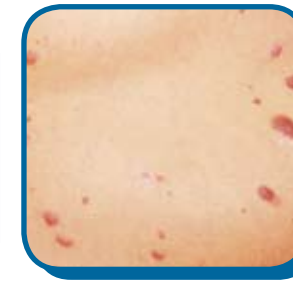


#### Diameter

A spot that is growing and changing in diameter or size.

## WARNING SIGNS

The following spots are not skin cancer but can be a warning sign that skin damage has occurred.



### Dysplastic Naevi ('atypical moles')

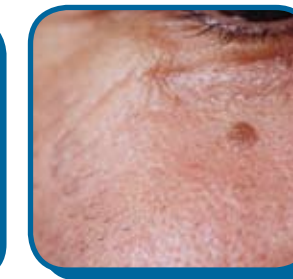
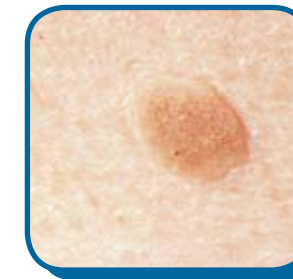
- Are odd shaped moles that indicate a greater risk of developing melanoma.
- Usually 5 - 10mm wide with uneven colouring.
- If you have lots of odd shaped moles get your skin checked regularly by your doctor.



### Solar Keratoses ('Sunspots')

- Generally hard, red, scaly spots on sun exposed areas of the skin.
- Most commonly found on the head, neck and on the back of the hands.
- Is a warning sign that the skin has been damaged and that skin cancers, in particular squamous cell carcinoma, may develop over time.
- If you have solar keratoses, protect yourself from further sun damage and have your skin checked regularly by your doctor.

## HARMLESS SPOTS



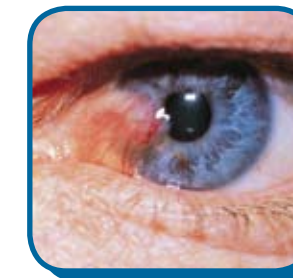
### Seborrhoeic Keratoses ('Senile warts')

- Common non-cancerous spots sometimes confused with melanomas.
- Raised warty-looking brown or black lesions with well defined borders.
- Mostly found on the trunk but can occur anywhere on the body.

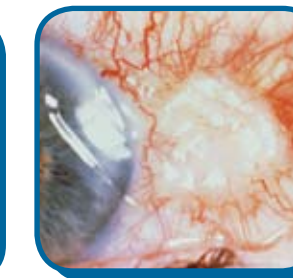
## EYE DAMAGE

### The sun can also damage your eyes.

In the short-term, sun exposure can cause burns to the eye similar to sunburn of the skin. Long term exposure can lead to cataracts (clouding of the lens), pterygium (tissue covering the cornea) and cancer of the conjunctiva or cornea. It is important to protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses and a hat.



**Pterygium**  
(tur-ridg-i-um)



**Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Conjunctiva**



**Cataract**

# Check your skin regularly

Most skin cancers are detected by people themselves or by a family member.

To check your skin, undress completely and stand in good light. Use a full length or hand-held mirror to check your back, legs and scalp. If there are areas you can't see properly ask a family member or your GP for a skin check – don't ignore them.

Make sure you check your entire body as skin cancers can sometimes occur on parts of the body not exposed to the sun, for example the soles of the feet. Go through the same checking sequence each time to get into a routine.

## Check your:

- Head, scalp, neck and ears  
Take an extra close look around the nose, lips, ears and scalp.
- Torso  
Check the front, back and sides of the torso.
- Arms, hands, fingers and nails  
Remember to look at the spaces between the fingers and the beds of your fingernails.
- Buttocks, legs and feet  
Remember to check between toes, under toenails and on the soles of feet.

## See a doctor straight away if you notice:

- A skin spot that is different from other spots around it.
- A mole or freckle that has changed in size, shape or colour.
- A new spot that has changed over weeks or months in size, shape or colour.
- An inflamed sore that has not healed within three weeks.



## Be SunSmart. Protect yourself in five ways from skin cancer.

UV levels are highest during the middle of the day so take extra care to **be SunSmart between the hours of 10am and 3pm.**



### Slip on protective clothing

Use clothing to cover as much skin as possible.



### Slop on SPF 30+ sunscreen

Make sure it's broad spectrum and water-resistant.



### Slap on a hat

Wear a hat that covers your face, head, neck and ears.



### Seek shade

Make use of trees or built shade or bring your own.



### Slide on some sunglasses

Close fitting wrap-around styles offer the best protection.

**For more information call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 or visit [www.cancerwa.asn.au](http://www.cancerwa.asn.au)**

Developed with assistance from Dr Jamie Von Nida, Dr Peter Randell and Dr Judy Cole.

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and Australian Association of Cancer Registries (AACR) Australian cancer incidence and mortality workbooks (ACIM). AIHW, 2008.

2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Non-melanoma skin cancer: general practice consultations, hospitalization and mortality. Canberra: AIHW, 2008.

