



# Skin Cancer

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## Saving Your Skin from Sun Damage

### Why is the sun so bad for my skin?

The sun's rays, which are called ultraviolet A and ultraviolet B rays (UVA and UVB rays) damage your skin. This leads to early wrinkles, skin cancer, and other skin problems.

Being in the sun over time, even if you don't burn, can lead to skin cancer. A tan is the body's desperate attempt to protect itself from the sun's harmful rays.

### Are tanning booths safer?

No. Tanning booths use ultraviolet rays. Makers of booths may claim that they use "harmless" UVA rays, but both UVA and UVB rays cause skin damage. While UVA rays take longer than UVB rays to damage the skin, they go deeper into the skin than UVB rays.

## Where is skin cancer most likely to occur?

Most skin cancers occur on parts of the body that are repeatedly exposed to the sun. These areas include the head, neck, face, tips of the ears, hands, forearms, shoulders, back, chests of men, and the back and lower legs of women.

## What are the risk factors for skin cancer?

A number of things may put you at higher risk of having skin cancer:

- Having fair skin, red or blond hair
- Having light-coloured eyes
- Sunburning easily
- Having many moles, freckles, or birthmarks
- Working or playing outside
- Being in the sun a lot as a child
- Having had a serious sunburn
- Having family members with skin cancer
- Tanning in the sun or with a sunlamp



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## What does a normal mole look like?

A normal mole is a solid tan, brown, dark brown or flesh coloured. Its edges are well-defined. It's usually smaller than ¼ inch in diameter and has a round or oval shape. It should be flat or dome-like.

## How can I tell if my mole isn't normal?

The main thing to look for is any change in a mole that you have or the appearance of a new mole. Most normal moles appear by age 30. Any moles that appear after age 30 should be watched carefully and brought to the attention of your family doctor.

### Signs of skin cancer ABCDE rule

**A for asymmetry:** A mole that, when divided in half, doesn't look the same on both sides.

**B for border:** A mole with edges that are blurry or jagged

**C for colour:** Changes in the colour of a mole, including darkening, spread of colour, loss of color, or the appearance of multiple colours such as blue, red, white, pink, purple, or gray.

**D for diameter:** A mole larger than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in diameter.

**E for elevation:** A mole that is raised above the skin and has an uneven surface.

#### Other signs include:

- A mole that bleeds
- A fast-growing mole
- A scaly or crusted growth on the skin
- A sore that won't heal
- A mole that itches

## How can I **prevent** skin cancer?

The key is to avoid being in the sun or using sunlamps. If you're going to be in the sun for any length of time, wear clothes made from tight-woven cloth so the sun's rays can't get through to your skin, and stay in the shade when you can. Wear a wide brimmed hat to protect your face, neck and ears.

Remember that clouds and water won't protect you – at least 60% to 80% of the sun's rays can get through clouds and can reach swimmers at least one foot below the surface of the water. The sun's rays can also reflect off of the water, snow and white sand.

### Tips on Preventing Skin Cancer

- Avoid the sun, especially from 11:00am to 3:00pm when the sun's rays are the strongest
- Don't use tanning booths or sunlamps
- Wear protective clothing and hats
- Check your skin yourself every month for signs of skin cancer
- If you see an area of your skin that looks unusual, ask your family doctor about it

### Should I use sunscreen?

If you can't protect yourself by staying out of the sun or wearing the right kind of clothing, use sunscreen to help protect you. But don't think that you are completely safe from the sun just because you are wearing sunscreen.

### How should sunscreen be used?

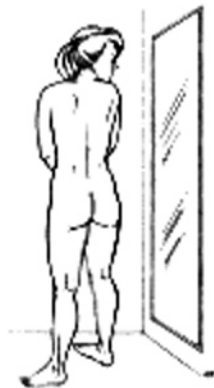
Use sunscreens with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more. Put the sunscreen everywhere the sun's rays might touch you, including your ears, the back of your neck and bald areas of your scalp. Put more on every hour if you're sweating or swimming.

## What's the best way to do a **skin self-examination?**

- The best way is to use a full-length mirror and a hand-held mirror to check every inch of your skin.



- First, you need to learn where your birthmarks, moles, and blemishes are and what they usually look like. Check for anything new, such as a change in the size, texture or colour of a mole, or a sore that doesn't heal.
- Look at the front and back of your body in the mirror, then raise your arms and look at the left and right sides.



## skin self-examination

- Bend your elbows and look carefully at your palms and forearms, including the undersides, and your upper arms.
- Check the back and front of your legs.
- Look between your buttocks and around your genital area
- Sit and closely examine your feet, including the bottoms of your feet and the spaces between your toes



- Look at your face, neck and scalp. You may want to use a comb or a blow dryer to move hair so that you can see better.
- By checking yourself regularly, you'll get familiar with what's normal for you. If you find anything unusual, see your doctor. The earliest skin cancer is found, the better.

Tip for the week:

**Buy 3 tubes of sunscreen (30SPF) for your car, purse, or gym/golf bag that way you'll always be covered.**