

Living with Skin Cancer (non melanoma)

A Quick Guide

Contents

This is a brief summary of 'Living with skin cancer (non melanoma)' from our website. You will find more detailed information on there. In this information there are sections on

- Coping with skin cancer
- Looking after your skin
- Preventing skin cancer
- Checking for skin cancers
- Questions for your doctor
- Skin cancer organisations

You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

Coping with skin cancer

Nearly everyone diagnosed with skin cancer will have simple treatment and will be cured. Even so, being told you have cancer can be very difficult. You may feel very upset and confused at first.

Coping with skin cancer that has spread

A very small number of people will be told they have advanced skin cancer that has spread. Once skin cancer has spread to another body organ, it is unlikely to be curable. You may feel very upset and confused at first. Being diagnosed with cancer that has spread is likely to bring up many emotions. Most people feel shocked and don't know what to think. This news can be devastating to hear. It will take time to sink in. Give yourself that time.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you may have other areas of your life to consider. You may need time off work while you are having treatment. And this may cause financial difficulties. Who do you tell that you have cancer? You may have children to consider.

The coping with cancer section of our website contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections about how you may be feeling, telling people about your cancer, helping yourself and finding outside help, sex and sexuality. There is information on practical issues such as financial matters including benefits and sick pay, mortgages, pensions, loans and insurance.

Looking after your skin

If you have been diagnosed with skin cancer, you are at increased risk of getting another skin cancer in the future. To take care in the sun, we recommend that you

- Wear close weave cotton clothing in the sun, with long sleeves and trousers
- Wear a hat with a wide brim that shades your face and neck
- Use a high factor sunscreen when you are in the sun
- Spend time in the shade when the sun is strongest – between 11am and 3pm
- Never use a sunbed

A note about sunscreen

The sun protection factor (SPF) shows how much protection the sunscreen gives against UVB radiation. Factor 15 will filter out 93% of the sun's harmful rays. The highest protection you can get is factor 60, which will filter out 98% of the sun's rays. We recommend everyone use at least factor 15 (the higher the better). You also need a sunscreen that gives good protection against UVA radiation.

If you have had skin cancer, we would advise that you avoid spending too long in the sun. Your specialist may suggest you use a high factor sunscreen of about SPF 50 on any exposed skin. The SPF is to give you extra protection. It does not mean you can safely sunbathe.

Preventing skin cancer

If you have had a skin cancer in the past, you are at higher than average risk of getting another one. So you should be extra careful. Our website has advice on:

- The SunSmart message
- Spending time in the shade
- Covering up in the sun
- What sunscreen to buy and how best to use it

Checking for skin cancers

It is important that you make a habit of checking your own skin. If you find any changes in your skin that happen over a few weeks or months you should get your GP to look at them. This is especially important if you have had treatment for a previous skin cancer

What to ask your doctor about living with skin cancer

- Why did this happen to me?
- Will my treatment have any long term effects?
- What changes should I make to my lifestyle?
- Can I still go abroad on holiday?
- What precautions should I take in the sun?
- Should my children take special sun precautions?
- Can anyone help me cope with my anxiety about the skin cancer coming back?
- Where can I get help dealing with my feelings?
- Can you refer me for counselling?
- Do I have to pay for counselling?

Skin cancer organisations

Cancer Research UK

Website: www.cancerresearchuk.org

Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808 800 4040

British Association of Dermatologists (BAD)

Information for patients and doctors. The BAD publish patient information leaflets and clinical guidelines for the treatment of skin cancer in the UK.

Website: www.bad.org.uk/

Changing Faces

Telephone: 0300 0120 275 (support and advice line)

Email: info@changingfaces.org.uk

Website: www.changingfaces.org.uk

Lets Face It

Telephone: 01843 833 724

Website: www.lets-face-it.org.uk

Email: chrisletsfaceit@aol.com

Notes

For more information, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/cancerhelp>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on 0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in September 2014. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. Copyright Cancer Research UK 2014. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and in the Isle of Man (1103)