

Spot skin cancer early

Listen to
your body

If you want to know more about spotting the signs of skin cancer, this information is for you.

Cancer is much more common in people over the age of 50, but it can affect anyone of any age.

If you spot something unusual, tell your doctor. In most cases it won't be cancer, but if it is, finding it at an early stage means treatment is more likely to be successful.



Listen to your body

It could be a new mark or mole on your skin or nail, or one that has been there for a while and changed. It might be a mole that looks different from others on your body. It could be sore, itchy, bleeding or crusty.

Using 'ABCDE' might help you remember what mole changes to look out for. Tell your doctor if you notice even one of them.

- **Asymmetry** – The two halves of your mole don't look the same
- **Border** – It might be irregular, blurred or jagged
- **Colour** – It may be uneven with different colours, or be different from other moles
- **Diameter** – It might be the width of a pencil (6mm or more), and could be getting bigger or changing shape
- **Evolving** – Anything that changes over time



Talk to your doctor

Whether it's via phone, video or face-to-face, your doctor wants to hear about any unusual changes you're experiencing. If you're worried about talking to a doctor, here are some tips:

✓ Be prepared

Think about how to describe any changes and how long you've had them for. Writing down what you want to say and ask can help.

✓ Be honest

Tell the doctor about anything unusual, even if it doesn't seem important or you think it might be embarrassing. Your doctor is a professional and is used to helping with lots of different symptoms.

✓ Be thorough

Mention all your symptoms and don't put it down to 'just getting older', or assume it's part of another health condition.

✓ Stick with it

Don't worry about wasting your GP's time. Even if you're struggling to get an appointment, or you've been to see them already, they want to know if something's still not right.

There's no need to do regular skin checks, but if something doesn't look or feel quite right, don't ignore it. Talk to your GP.



Cut your risk

A bit of sun can help our bodies make vitamin D. But too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun (or sunbeds) is the main cause of skin cancer, and getting sunburnt increases the risk.

In the UK, the sun's UV rays are strongest between 11am and 3pm, from mid-March to mid-October.

When the sun is strong:

- ✓ Spend time in the shade
- ✓ Cover up with clothes, a hat, and UV protection sunglasses
- ✓ Apply sunscreen with at least SPF 30 and 4 or 5 stars generously and regularly

Sunburn isn't always raw, peeling or blistering. For people with lighter skin tones, it may go pink or red in the sun. For people with darker skin tones, skin may feel irritated, tender or itchy.

The more easily you get sunburnt, the more careful you need to be.



Early diagnosis saves lives

What if it is cancer?

Cancer survival is increasing – more people are surviving their cancer today than ever before.

When cancer is spotted at an early stage, treatment is more likely to be successful. And thanks to research, treatments are now kinder and more effective than ever.

How to find out more

Visit our website

Find out more about spotting cancer early, including information about cancer screening across the UK, at: cruk.org/spotcancerearly

Give us a call

Our Nurse Helpline is there if you're looking for information or support. Just call **0800 800 4040**.

If you'd like to provide any feedback on this leaflet or would like to know more about the information sources used to create it, please email publications@cancer.org.uk

And if you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support what we're doing, you can call **0300 123 1022**.

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