

Cancer: See the signs, save your skin



Early prevention is key with skin cancer



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By Health Shield's Wellbeing Team

Taking care of your skin might not always feel like a top priority, but it's an essential part of your health.

Did you know that nearly 430 non-melanoma skin cancers are diagnosed daily in the UK?¹ Or that more than 85% of melanoma cases are caused by sun exposure?² The good news is that most skin cancers are preventable when we take the right steps. By understanding the risks, debunking myths, and adopting some simple habits, you can safeguard your skin and boost your wellbeing.

Myths vs facts about skin cancer

Myth: People with darker skin don't get skin cancer.

Fact: While the risk is lower for those with darker skin tones, skin cancer can still occur. Regular skin checks are vital, no matter your skin type.

Myth: You only need sun protection in the summer.

Fact: UV rays can damage your skin all year round, even on cloudy days. Sun protection should be part of your routine, no matter the season.

Myth: If you don't burn, you're safe from skin cancer.

Fact: Even without visible sunburn, UV exposure can harm your skin and increase your cancer risk over time.

Why early detection matters

Early prevention and detection can make a significant difference. Spotting skin cancer early increases the chances of successful treatment, with survival rates improving when melanoma is identified at its earliest stage. That's why checking your skin regularly for unusual spots, moles, or changes is crucial.

¹ [Cancer Research UK](#)

² [Illinois Department of Public Health](#)

Tips for sun safety

Protecting yourself in the sun can reduce your risk and keep your skin healthy. Here's how to stay sun-safe everyday:

1 Cover up

Wear loose, long-sleeved tops and trousers to protect your skin from UV rays. A wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses are great for protecting your face, neck, and eyes.

2 Use sunscreen

Apply a generous amount of sunscreen with at least SPF30 to all exposed skin. Reapply regularly, especially after swimming or sweating. Don't forget often-missed spots like your ears, lips, and the back of your neck.

3 Find shade

When outdoors, seek shade during peak sunlight hours (11 am–3 pm). If you work outside, take breaks in shaded areas to reduce exposure.

4 Stay hydrated

Hot weather can take a toll on your body. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and avoid overheating.

5 Check your skin frequently

Examine your skin regularly to look for changes in moles or the appearance of new, unusual spots. If you notice anything concerning, like changes in shape, size, or colour, speak to your GP or a dermatologist. Early action can make all the difference.

The bigger picture

Skin cancer rates in the UK have more than doubled since the 1990s, but around 9 out of 10 cases are preventable with the right habits.³ Sun safety isn't about missing out on sunny days; it's about enjoying them wisely. By incorporating these simple steps into your daily routine and keeping an eye on any changes, you're taking charge of your health.

Whether it's booking that overdue skin check or reminding a loved one to apply sunscreen, every small step matters. This Skin Cancer Awareness Month, we encourage you to make prevention a priority for yourself and your community. Together, we can create a safer, healthier future for all.

³ [Cancer Research UK](#)

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