

Skin Cancer

What to look out for!

There are two main types of skin cancer, malignant melanomas and non melanoma skin cancers.

Malignant melanomas - This is the most serious and dangerous type of skin cancer. They grow rapidly, spread early and can be fatal. They usually arise from freckles or moles.

The warning signs to look out for are any **one** of the following:

- A mole or freckle that is **getting bigger**.
- A mole or freckle that is **changing shape**; most moles are round or oval with a symmetrical shape. When a mole develops an irregular border it is a bad sign.
- A mole or freckle that **changes colour**; most moles are an even shade of light or dark brown. When a mole develops irregular shades of colour throughout it is a bad sign.

If any of your moles develop **any one of the above** signs you should contact your doctor immediately, as early detection and removal of a malignant melanoma can be lifesaving.

Other warning signs to look out for in a mole or a freckle are as follows:

- Itch
- Size greater than the head of a pencil (i.e. <7mm)
- Bleeding and crusting

Skin cancer leaflet - Adopted with permission from The Derbyshire Joint Area Prescribing Committee

Non melanoma skin cancers - These include basal cell carcinomas (BCC) and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC). SCC's grow slowly and rarely spread beyond the skin unless they are neglected for a long time. BCC's can never spread beyond the skin, no matter how long they are present, so they are not fatal. However, they can spread locally within the skin and cause troublesome ulcers or damage local structures such as the eyes, ears or lips.

The warning signs to look out for are as follows:

- A new growth on the skin which appears for no apparent reason.
- A sore or an ulcer that will not heal after four weeks.
- A persistent isolated scaly patch on the skin that does not clear up with topical creams.

If you have any of these warning signs, please get your doctor to check your skin.