

Skin cancer - Are people really aware of the risks and how it can be prevented?

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the UK, with over 100,000 cases diagnosed annually. Melanoma is the least common but most serious type of skin cancer, with 8,000 new cases and 1,800 deaths each year in the UK. Malignant melanoma is now the most common cancer in young adults aged between 15 and 34 and can be fatal. The incidence rate is increasing more than any other major cancer in the UK and experts estimate that rates will double every 10 to 20 years in countries with white populations. There are also other skin conditions caused by exposure to the sun, including skin texture changes, fine lines and easy bruising. However, other than staying out of the sun altogether, the best prevention against skin cancer - and also the best anti-ageing and anti-wrinkle treatment - is using the right level of sun protection when you are out in the sun.

Ultraviolet light (UVA and UVB) from the sun's rays is the major cause of most skin cancers. According to cancer charity Cancerbackup.org.uk, the incidence of skin cancer is increasing because people spend more time outdoors, are living longer and increasing the amount of lifetime sun exposure, and tans are still considered to be attractive and healthy. Most skin damage from the sun occurs before the age of 20. Fair-skinned people, children and young adults are at increased risk of developing skin cancer. This damage often does not show up until they are well into their 40s, sometimes much later.

As well as increasing the risk of skin cancer, sun damage also leads to premature ageing of the skin, which means that skin becomes coarse, leathery and wrinkled at a younger age. Using adequate sun protection outdoors is a better anti-wrinkle treatment than any expensive anti-ageing cream.

It's not just over-exposure to the sun that increases the risk of skin cancer - sun beds are just as dangerous. Cancer Research UK recently issued a stark warning to sunbed users that over-exposure to UV rays on sunbeds can prove as deadly as staying out too long in the sun. According to Cancer Research UK, eight out of ten sunbed users have increased their risk of a life-threatening form of the disease - repeated use of sunbeds by people under 35 increases the risk of malignant melanoma by 75%

"Sun beds aren't a safe alternative to tanning. Like the sun, sun beds give out harmful UV rays, which damage the DNA in our skin cells and can cause skin cancer. The more you use a sun bed, the greater your risk of skin cancer. So when the tan fades, the damage remains," says Sara Hiom, Cancer Information Expert from Cancer Research UK. The charity is concerned that people are ignoring the risks in their quest for a tan, despite the growing evidence of a link between sunbed use and skin cancer.

To reduce your risk of developing skin cancer and other skin conditions, follow these tips:

- Avoid the sun where possible and seek out shade, especially between 11am and 3pm when it is at its strongest
- Wear sunscreen of at least factor 15, even on cloudy days
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat, protective clothing and sunglasses
- Avoid the use of sunbeds

About the Author

Jane Lewis RGN, Development Director, sk:n Clinics - sk:n was established in 1990 and is the UK's leading provider of treatments and products for skin conditions, including: [laser hair removal](#), [laser tattoo removal](#) and acne treatments.

Source: <http://www.healthsnare.com>