

Skin cancer - the symptoms and treatment

10 MAY 2021

Malignant melanoma is the fifth most common cancer in the UK, with around 16,200 new cases diagnosed in the UK each year.¹ Yet, 86% of malignant melanoma cases could have been prevented.²

WHAT CAUSES MALIGNANT MELANOMA?

There is one main preventable factor that increases the risk of developing melanoma - UV light (radiation). UV light comes from the sun or sunbeds. But some people are more at risk of getting melanoma than others.

MOLES AND MELANOMA

Moles are clusters of cells that produce a pigment in the skin and it is normal to have them. Melanomas develop when those cells behave abnormally and invade the skin around moles or spread to other areas such as the lymph nodes, liver and lungs. The more moles on the body, the higher the risk of melanoma, however, that doesn't mean that someone will definitely get melanoma if they have lots of moles. But it is advised to certainly keep a watchful eye on all their moles.

WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

All melanomas do not look the same and there are several different types. Follow the 'ABCDE' rule below as a melanoma may show one or more of the following features:

- A - asymmetry (an irregular shaped mole)
- B - borders (ragged edges)
- C - colour change or a mole that is a different colour in one part than in another
- D - diameter (any increase in size, but particularly more than about 6mm across)
- E - elevation (raising from the surface, especially if it is irregularly raised)

WHO IS AT RISK?

High risk groups include those with fair skin who burn easily, people with lots of moles, those with a family history of melanomas, those who were sunburnt in childhood and those with a weakened immune system.



1 - Cancer Research UK, 2018 - Skin cancer rates rocket by 45% in 10 years.
2 - Cancer Research UK - Melanoma skin cancer statistics.

TREATMENT

If diagnosed with skin cancer, the specialist will determine the best treatment and care for the member.

Treatment is likely to depend on:

- The type of skin cancer
- How far it's grown or spread
- Where the cancer is
- The stage of the cancer (if relevant)

The specialist will discuss treatment options, their benefits and the possible side effects with the member.

SUPPORT

A cancer diagnosis, and even the prospect of one, can be an extremely stressful and worrying time for an individual and their loved ones. Therefore, take comfort in knowing PHC have dedicated cancer nurses available, via the phone, to provide support from day one.

DEDICATED CANCER NURSE

If a member is diagnosed with cancer, we can put them in touch with our Dedicated Nurse Service because we know that a swift diagnosis and prompt treatment access must go hand in hand with genuine help, support and understanding from people who truly care.

Every one of our friendly nurses understands what a diagnosis like this means. The member might take comfort in discussing their symptoms or talking through how to break the news to the people they care about. Whatever they need, wherever they need it, one of the dedicated nurses is waiting to talk.

