

Why you should check your skin for moles

We've mentioned it before, but your skin is constantly changing and won't forget any sunburn or strong exposure to the sun you might have had during the summer. This makes it even more important to regularly check your skin for unusual looking moles throughout the year as they might only develop months or even years after.






Any moles that change size, shape or colour, as well as the appearance of new moles are common signs of skin cancer.

As we wear lighter clothes during the summer, it's more likely for us to notice changes in our skin.

Our friends and family might notice it too and point it out to us. While we wrap up more with layers and long sleeved clothes during the winter, it is less likely to recognise those.

That's why it is so important to self-check your skin regularly but especially to know how to do it properly.

Cancer Research UK* recommends the 'ABCDE' method to remember what mole changes to look out for. If you are concerned, always make sure to speak to your doctor.

A		Asymmetry The two halves of your mole don't look the same
B		Border Might be irregular, blurred or jagged
C		Colour May be uneven with different colours, or be different from other moles
D		Diameter Might be the width of a pencil (6mm or more), and could be getting bigger or changing shape
E		Evolving Anything that changes over time



*'Spot skin cancer early,' Cancer Research UK

When to seek medical help

If you spot a mole that changed size, shape or colour that has not healed after 4 weeks or noticed a new mole, seek medical help from

your GP. While most moles are unlikely to be skin cancer, it is crucial to get it checked.



How The Doctors Clinic Group can help - Your one-stop-shop for all things healthcare

When you are worried about a new mole or a mole that changed colour, size or shape, always make sure to talk to your doctor. Your GP is your first port of call to get your skin screened.

At The Doctors Clinic Group, we offer you same day face-to-face GP appointments at convenient locations across London, the South East, Manchester and Birmingham, plus you can see a GP from the comfort of your own home with our online GP services.

In addition, we also offer rapid onward referrals to specialists including dermatology, x-rays and scans, physiotherapy, health assessments, dietitian and weight management, mental health services as well as virtual health services.

If you have private medical insurance, you may be able to claim for some costs under your policy or you can use The Doctors Clinic Group services on a self-pay basis.

For any queries, please contact corporate servicing:

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How to look after your skin

Put your health first – Protect your skin

While many of us are thinking more about their skin health in the summer months, taking care of your skin all year-round is very important.

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the world. Most of the time, a mole is absolutely normal and there is no need to do regular skin checks. However, if something doesn't feel quite right, it is crucial to speak to your doctor to get it checked by a dermatology professional.

At The Doctors Clinic Group, we want to help you understand how to take care of your skin. Read on to find out why you need to take good care of your skin, how to check for unusual looking moles and



also which steps to take towards a good skin health routine.

Why you need to take care of your skin all year round

Did you know that your skin is constantly changing?

As the largest organ of a human's body, it is important to take good care of it all year round to achieve optimum skin health.

Many of us associate taking care of our skin during the warmer months when directly exposed to sunlight. But skin damage that occurred during the summer can take months or even years to

appear as sunspots or as early signs of skin cancer. That's why it's key to regularly do a skin screening at home.

And your skin won't forget – your skin works like a memory bank and remembers all the time you've spent in the sun without sun protection, visits to the sunbeds and especially sunburns.

Here are some useful tips how to take care of your skin:

1. Sun screen all year round

Ultraviolet radiation (UV) is formed of UVA and UVB rays, which are mainly responsible for causing skin cancer. UVA can also induce premature-ageing and DNA damage, making it the most dangerous of the two. However, UVB produces sunburn after long sun exposure, but is widely used in safe environments (hospitals) for the treatment of certain skin conditions, such as psoriasis, eczema or vitiligo.

Both types of UV are the strongest in the summer, but this doesn't mean you should stop using sunscreen in the cooler months as sunshine still reaches the earth or bounces off reflective surfaces like ice or snow.

No matter if you have fair or olive skin, it is important to choose the right sun screen. It is recommended to choose a high protection SPF (minimum 30 SPF, ideally 50 SPF). But also make sure to check out the back of the sun screen bottle for the star rating, ranging from 1-5. The star rating indicates a balanced protection against both UVA and UVB rays. The higher the rating, the better the protection.

When selecting which sun screen to buy, first check out the star rating, and then decide on the strength of the SPF. Don't forget to apply sun screen 15-30 minutes before going out in the sun, and to re-apply it every 2-3 hours for optimum protection.

2. Cover up

It might sound obvious but wearing clothing is the first point of protection.

While layering up in the winter months might be easier, we have to remember to protect our skin with light clothing such as linen in the summer months too. Our hands, neck and

especially the face are exposed to the sun all year, and thus are also prone to skin damage.

Make sure to wear SPF on your face, and cover up with a hat and sunglasses to protect your skin against UVA and UVB rays when going out in the sun.

3. Avoid the sun when it's the strongest

It's widely known to stay out of direct sunlight.

The sun's UV rays are strongest between 11am and 3pm, from mid-March to mid-October in the UK. It's tempting to go out and enjoy the sunshine, but it's best to seek shade during those hours to protect your skin.

If you have to leave the house, make sure to take extra care by covering up with clothing, hat and sunglasses, apply strong SPF, and maybe stop by a café for a cool drink or a coffee to seek shade when the sun is at its brightest.



TOP TIP - The sun's UV rays are the strongest when your shadow is shorter than you. This means you're more likely to burn, so it's best to seek shade, re-apply sun screen and cover up with a light jacket if you carry one with you.

What is skin cancer?

Non-melanoma skin cancer refers to a group of cancers that slowly develop in the upper layer of the skin. This type of skin cancer is more common.

The first sign of non-melanoma skin cancer is usually the appearance of a lump or discoloured patch on the skin. It usually persists after a few weeks and slowly progresses over months or sometimes even years.

Non-melanoma skin cancer develops most often on

areas of skin regularly exposed to the sun, whether it's summer or winter. This includes the face, ears, hands, shoulders, upper chest and back.

There are 147,000 new cases of non-melanoma skin cancer diagnosed each year in the UK, with men being more affected than women as well as the elderly.

Melanoma skin cancer is less common but more serious.



Who is most at risk?



Age - The elderly are more likely to develop non-melanoma skin cancer. But skin cancers can develop in younger people too.



Sun exposure - Most skin cancers, known as non-melanoma, are caused by exposure to sunlight. This can be due to long term exposure, or short intense periods of strong sunlight or burning. The UV light in sunlight damages the DNA in the skin cells. That's why damage can happen months or years before a cancer develops.



History of sunburn - Your risk might be higher if you have been sunburnt several times. The risk is especially high if you were burned during childhood. But it's never too late to take extra precautions.



Sunbeds - Research has proven that using a sunbed causes melanoma. There is now evidence to say that sunbeds might increase the risk of non-melanoma skin cancer, so it's best to avoid them.



Fair skin - People with light skin, light coloured eyes, or light and red hair are at a higher risk as they have less protective melanin pigments. This applies also to people with lots of moles and freckles, or skin that burns easily. While people with darker skin are less likely to get skin cancer, they can still develop it, especially on places like the palms of the hand or soles of the feet.



Past medical history - People who had skin cancer before are at higher risk to develop it again. Researchers think this is most likely because of sun exposure. You should cover up in the sun and look out for any signs of another skin cancer.



Family history - Most non-melanoma skin cancers don't run in families. However, some families might have a higher number than normal according to research. Some skin types run in families, putting fair skinned families at a higher risk. However there might be some other inherited genes that slightly increase the risk of non-melanoma skin cancer in some families.

