

Malignant melanoma self examination

Skin Oncology Team Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

Although most people who have had thin malignant melanomas are cured by having them removed, some are not. The malignant melanoma may reappear on or under the skin. If this happens, it will probably be within the first two years after surgery although sometimes it can be many years later.

This leaflet gives instructions on how to look and feel for skin changes in both the treated areas and other places where malignant melanomas may develop.

How do I check myself?

Your consultant will already have shown you how and where you need to look and feel most carefully.

At least every month, you should check the area where you had your operation, between that area and the nearest group of lymph nodes and the lymph nodes themselves. Comparing one set of lymph nodes with those on the other side of your body may help you to find any changes.

Lymph nodes can trap malignant melanoma cells before they pass on anywhere else in your body. If cancer cells are found in any of your lymph nodes, these nodes will be removed. Lymph nodes are found in many places in your body but for melanoma, the important sites are the neck, groin (inner thighs) and armpits.

You should check all of the area for:

- Black, brown or new marks on the skin.
- Lumps beneath the skin like rice or a pea which do not go away.

If you find any of the above, you should contact your GP as soon as possible.

We want to help you get to know your body so that you will be able to tell if there is a change on or under your skin. It makes good sense to check all over your body, three or four times a year.

It is a good idea to begin by finding out whether you have any birthmarks, moles or blemishes. How do they look and feel?

Use the tips of your fingers with a circular motion and a little pressure to feel your way around your skin. Over time, you will be looking for any changes in the way the skin looks or feels.

Moles

It is important to tell your skin consultant as soon as possible of any changes in the size and shape of existing moles which have happened over a four to six week period. Changes which have happened over months or longer are probably fine; however, if in doubt, take a photograph and check again three to four weeks later.

Five easy steps to skin self examination

All you need for your five minute skin check is:

- a well-lit room
- a full-length mirror
- a hand-held mirror
- a chair or stool

The help of a relative or friend may also be useful.

- Look at your face, neck, ears and scalp. You will find looking at your scalp easier if you use a comb or hairdryer to part your hair.
- Look at the front and back of your body in the mirror. Raise your arms and look at your left and right sides. Ladies, make sure to check under your breasts.
- Bend your elbows and look at your forearm (the area of your arm between your elbow and wrist), the undersides and upper arms. Now carefully look at your fingernails, hands and palms.
- Look at the back, front and sides of your legs, not forgetting between your toes, the toenails and soles of your feet.
- Sit on a chair and put each leg in turn up on a stool. Use a hand mirror to inspect the genital area. Finally, stand up and use two mirrors to check your buttocks.

It is important to check your skin

We need your help to keep you healthy. Help us to help you by examining the area around the site of your operation right up to your nearest set of lymph nodes at least every month. Check from top to toe three or four times a year. The best time to examine your skin is after a bath or shower.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following organisation:

Macmillan Cancer Support

0808 808 00 00

<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Cancertypes/Melanoma/Livingwithmelanoma/Lifeaftertreatment.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Skin Oncology Team on 01384 456111 ext. 3088 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/oncology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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