



Skin Cancer Awareness

Sunburn can occur within fifteen minutes, and the damage caused is permanent, irreversible and adds up with each exposure to the sun, creating the risk of skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer worldwide and South Africa (SA) has one of the highest monitored ultraviolet (UV) levels in the world, resulting in one of the highest skin cancer rates globally. UV radiation is just as dangerous for outdoor labourers, sports people, on the playground or when driving to work, as it is when at the beach or pool. Rays can also reflect off surfaces and cause sunburn when it is overcast.

The incidence is inversely related to the amount of melanin skin pigmentation and fair-skinned people are most susceptible.



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Types of Skin Cancer

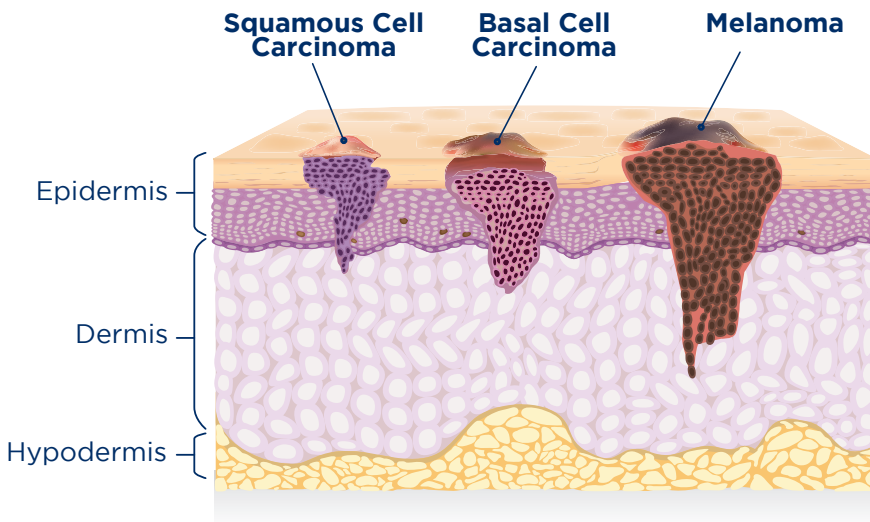
There are two main categories of skin cancer, namely, melanoma and non-melanoma.

Melanoma, is less common than other skin cancers, but it is the most dangerous. It is of special importance to note that excessive ultraviolet (UV) radiation received as a child, increases the risk of melanoma later in life.

Non-melanoma skin cancers mainly comprise **Basal Cell Carcinoma** and **Squamous Cell Carcinoma**. Of these, Basal Cell Carcinoma is the most common and the least dangerous. These cancers are linked to long term exposure to the sun, for example people with professional sports careers or outside occupations. If left untreated, these can lead to disfigurement, or the loss of an eye, nose, or ear, so early detection is important.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) is most frequently seen on sun-exposed areas of the body such as the head, neck and back of the hands. Although women frequently get SCC on their lower legs, it is possible to get SCC on any part of the body, including the inside of the mouth, lips, and genitals. People who use tanning beds have a much higher risk of getting SCC - they also tend to get SCC earlier in life.

Types of Skin Cancer



How to lower your skin cancer risk

Do a monthly “Spot the Spot” checkup:

Initially, skin cancers are often asymptomatic. The most frequent presentation is an irregular red or pigmented lesion that does not go away. Check your skin carefully every month and ask a family member or friend to examine your back, the top of your head and any area you can't see on your own.



If you notice any of these warning signs, see a doctor or dermatologist immediately - follow the A B C D E Warning Signs:

A

Asymmetry:
Is one half unlike the other?

B

Border:
Are the borders jagged or notched?

C

Colour:
Is it extra dark, several colours or changing colour?

D

Diameter:
Is it larger than a pencil eraser?

E

Evolution:
Has it changed in colour or shape over time?

Always seek medical advice as soon as possible when concerned about a particular spot on your skin.

Avoid the following:

- Stay out of the sun between 10am and 4pm – stay under the shade of trees or an umbrella as much as possible.
- Avoid sunbeds and sunlamps.



Use an effective sunscreen

- To get the most protection out of sunscreen, choose one with an Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15. If you are fair to very fair skin, you may want a higher SPF of 30 to 50.
- Products usually expire two years after manufacture – don't use a product that has been opened and used after a year has passed.



Apply sunscreen correctly

- It's important to know the best SPF for your skin-type.
- Always apply sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outside and re-apply at least every two hours, after towel drying, perspiring, or swimming.



Wear protective clothing

- Wear sunglasses with a UV protection rating of UV400.
- Wear protective clothing and swimsuits and thickly-woven fabric hats with wide brims – avoid caps where the neck and ears are exposed.



Educate and protect children

- Our youth should take special precaution when spending time in the sun. Two blistering burns before the age of 18, can dramatically increase the risk of getting skin cancer later in life!



Should you have any questions, talk to a healthcare provider at your closest Platinum Health medical facility.



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