



SKIN SELF EXAMINATION

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers, afflicting perhaps two thirds of Australians. Skin cancer is also the easiest cancer to cure, if diagnosed and treated early. However, if the skin cancer is allowed to progress, it can result in disfigurement and even death.

Everyone should undertake skin self-examination. Teach your children how from an early age. Skin self examination can be supplemented by a doctor's examination.

Skin self examination should be done often enough to become a habit, but not so often as to feel like a bother. For most people an interval of three months is ideal. Skin checks from your doctor are usually performed annually.

After the first few times, self-examination should take no longer than ten minutes.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

There are three main types of skin cancer:

- Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)
- Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)
- Melanoma



Basal Cell Carcinoma



Squamous Cell Carcinoma



Melanoma

Because each has many different appearances, it is important to know the early warning signs. Look especially for change of any kind. Do not ignore a suspicious spot simply because it does not hurt. Skin cancers may be painless, but dangerous all the same. If you notice one or more of the warning signs, see a doctor promptly.

THE WARNING SIGNS

A mole, birthmark, beauty mark, or any brown spot that:

- Changes colour.
- Increases in size or thickness.
- Changes in texture.
- Is becoming more irregular in outline.

A spot or sore that:

- Itches or hurts.
- Crusts or scabs.
- Ulcerates or bleeds.
- Fails to heal within 3 weeks.

WHAT TO LOOK AT

- The self-examination should start with the head and end with the feet.
- Self-examination should include the scalp, face, neck, beneath facial hair and trunk.
- A hair dryer is useful for examining the scalp.



- On the upper part of the body, self-examination should include the armpits, hands, finger webs and nail beds. In a full length mirror check the torso and women also need to check under breasts.



- Two mirrors should be used to examine the back, back of neck, buttocks and back of legs. (see diagram).



- On the legs it should include toe webs, toe nail beds and soles of the feet.



BE SURE TO SHOW YOUR DOCTOR ANYTHING ON YOUR SKIN THAT CONCERNS YOU

Skin examination should be a fairly regular practice as Australians have the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.

The earlier the better....

Like most cancers, the earlier you detect skin cancer the simpler the treatment. Because skin cancer is on the outside of your body it is the easiest cancer to see. So even though skin cancer is the commonest cancer, it is also the most curable. Keep your eyes open for any changes and take a few sensible precautions.