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# Living with Skin Cancer (non melanoma) - A Quick Guide

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## Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Living with skin cancer (non melanoma)' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Coping with skin cancer
- Looking after your skin
- Preventing skin cancer
- Checking for skin cancers
- Questions for your doctor
- Skin cancer organisations

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## Coping with skin cancer

Nearly everyone diagnosed with skin cancer will have simple treatment and will be cured. Even so, being told you have cancer can be very difficult. You may feel very upset and confused at first.

## Coping with skin cancer that has spread

A very small number of people will be told they have advanced skin cancer that has spread. Once skin cancer has spread to another body organ, it is unlikely to be curable. You may feel very upset and confused at first. Being diagnosed with cancer that has spread is likely to bring up

many emotions. Most people feel shocked and don't know what to think. This news can be devastating to hear. It will take time to sink in. Give yourself that time.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you may have other areas of your life to consider. You may need time off work while you are having treatment. And this may cause financial difficulties. Who do you tell that you have cancer? You may have children to consider.

The coping with cancer section of CancerHelp UK contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections about how you may be feeling, telling people about your cancer, helping yourself and finding outside help, sex and sexuality. There is information on practical issues such as financial matters including benefits and sick pay, mortgages, pensions, loans and insurance.

## Looking after your skin

If you have been diagnosed with skin cancer, you are at increased risk of getting another skin cancer in the future. To take care in the sun, we recommend that you



- Wear close weave cotton clothing in the sun, with long sleeves and trousers
- Wear a hat that shades your face and neck
- Use a high factor sun cream when you are in the sun
- Avoid the sun when it is strongest - between 11am and 3pm
- Never use a sun bed

### A note about sun creams

The sun protection factor (SPF) shows how much protection the suncream gives you. Factor 15 will filter out 93% of the sun's harmful rays. The highest protection you can get is factor 60, which will filter out 98% of the sun's rays. We recommend that you use at least factor 15.

If you have had skin cancer, we would advise that you avoid spending too long in the sun and that you use at least a factor 15 sunscreen on any exposed skin. The SPF is to give you extra protection. It does not mean you can safely sunbathe.

### Preventing skin cancer

If you have had a skin cancer in the past, you are at higher than average risk of getting another one. So you should be extra careful. CancerHelp UK has advice on

- The SunSmart message
- Covering up in the sun
- Suncreams
- Putting your cream on
- Protecting children from skin cancer

### Checking for skin cancers

It is important that you make a habit of checking your own skin. If you find any new abnormalities on the skin that don't go

away after 4 to 6 weeks, or existing ones that are getting bigger, you should get your GP to look at them. This is especially important if you have had treatment for a previous skin cancer.

### What to ask your doctor about living with skin cancer

- Will my treatment affect me long term?
- What changes should I make to my life style?
- Can I still go abroad on holiday?
- What precautions should I take in the sun?
- Should my children take special sun precautions?
- Why did this happen to me?
- Can anyone help me cope with my anxiety about the skin cancer coming back?
- Where can I get help dealing with my feelings?
- Can you refer me for counselling?
- Do I have to pay for counselling?

### Skin cancer organisations

Cancer Research UK  
 Main website: [www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)  
 Patient information website:  
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>  
 Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808 800 4040

MARCS Line (Melanoma and Related Cancers of the Skin)  
 Telephone: 01722 415071  
 Email: [MARCSline@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:MARCSline@salisbury.nhs.uk)  
 Website: [www.wessexcancer.org/](http://www.wessexcancer.org/)



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Changing Faces  
Telephone: 0845 4500 275  
Email: [info@changingfaces.org.uk](mailto:info@changingfaces.org.uk)  
Website: [www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

## Notes

Lets Face It  
Telephone: 01843 833 724  
Website: [www.lets-face-it.org.uk](http://www.lets-face-it.org.uk)  
Email: [chrisletsfaceit@aol.com](mailto:chrisletsfaceit@aol.com)

### More information

For more information about skin cancer, visit our website  
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for cancer trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040** 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

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Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in June 2011. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2011. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).