



# Melanoma

## What is it?

Melanoma is a severe form of skin cancer and is more common in men. Australia has the highest rate of melanoma in the world. It is often found on the trunk in men and legs in women.

Melanoma sometimes looks like a brown spot or mole. It begins in the cells found in the upper layer of the skin. When these cells get damaged by the sun, they can mutate, grow out of control and spread to other organs. They can spread quickly if not found early.

Melanoma can start in a new spot or in a spot that exists. There are many types. Your GP or skin specialist (dermatologist) can help you learn more about how to check your body and your risk level. Treatment depends on the type of cancer, if it has spread and your health. Treatment includes surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP may help you learn more about melanoma and the treatment options. They may provide advice about what to do now and where you can find support.

Your GP may perform skin checks. This may include taking photos of spots or moles to see if they change over time. If a spot or mole changes, your GP may refer you to a specialist for more tests and treatment. Treatment depends on the stage of the cancer, its size and if it has spread. If you need treatment, you will be managed by a healthcare team. Your GP will play a key role in your care and health check-ups.

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may check in with you often to see how you're going. They may stay up-to-date with your progress and help manage your future care plan.

After your treatment program, your GP may contact you to keep an eye on your symptoms and make sure you are feeling better.

They may talk to you about:

- How to prevent skin cancer from coming back
- How to check your skin for signs of skin cancer
- Family member risk

## What can I do?

Talk to your GP about how often you should have check-ups after your treatment. Follow your GP's advice about how to care for your skin and protect it from sun damage.

Living a healthy lifestyle helps you to stay strong during your treatment:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Keep your blood pressure within the normal range
- Limit drinking and quit smoking
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get eight hours of sleep each night
- Reduce stress
- Have regular check-ups with your GP

### Be SunSmart

For the best protection, use all five SunSmart steps:

1. Slip on covering clothing
2. Slop on SPF 30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen
3. Slap on a hat
4. Seek shade
5. Slide on some sunglasses

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## What supports are available?

If your GP refers you to an oncologist you can visit one of these local cancer centres. The staff at these centres provide care and support during your treatment.

- **Liverpool Hospital Cancer Services:** Phone 8738 5211
- **Campbelltown Hospital Cancer Services:** Phone 4634 3000
- **Bankstown Lidcombe Hospital Cancer Services:** Phone 9722 8606
- **Bowral and District Hospital Medical Oncology Clinic:** Phone 4861 0200
- **Southern Highlands Private Hospital Cancer and Day Infusion Centre:** Phone 4862 9470
- **Macarthur Cancer Therapy Centre:** Phone 4634 4300

Private specialists are also an option. Ask your GP to refer you.



## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How do I know if the cancer has spread?
- Are my family members at risk?
- What are my treatment options?
- Will I need surgery?
- What activities should I avoid?
- How often should I see you for a follow-up?



## Where can I learn more?

- **Cancer Australia** – Melanoma of the Skin: [canceraustralia.gov.au](http://canceraustralia.gov.au)
- **Cancer Council Australia** – Melanoma: What to Expect: [cancerpathways.org.au](http://cancerpathways.org.au)
- **Melanoma Institute Australia:** [melanoma.org.au](http://melanoma.org.au)
- **National Cancer Institute** – Skin Cancer (Including Melanoma): [cancer.gov](http://cancer.gov)
- **From Cancer Council NSW:**
  - Accommodation for Cancer Patients and Carers: [cancercouncil.com.au](http://cancercouncil.com.au)
  - Checking for Skin Cancer: [cancercouncil.com.au](http://cancercouncil.com.au)
  - Melanoma Skin Cancer: [cancercouncil.com.au](http://cancercouncil.com.au)
  - Sun-smart Information Sheets: [cancercouncil.com.au](http://cancercouncil.com.au)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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