

# Turning your back on the sun

Overexposure to UV rays can lead to skin cancer so follow a dermatologist's advice to stay well



**S**kin cancer is the fifth most common form of cancer in the UK with at least 100,000 new cases diagnosed each year. More than 2,500 people die each year in the UK from the disease – that's seven people every day – and rates of malignant melanoma are rising faster than any other type of common cancer.

If you have a family member with the disease, there is a greater risk of you getting it, too. And those who have one skin cancer have a 20% chance of developing a second within two years.

Other risk factors include ultraviolet light exposure (sun or tanning beds) and fair-skinned individuals with a history of repeated sunburns.

## Identifying the cancer

There are three main types: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and malignant melanoma.

Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common cancer in humans and accounts for around 75% of all skin cancers in the UK. Most BCCs have few if any signs or symptoms. They may present as a scab that bleeds occasionally and fails to heal.

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) accounts for about 20% of all skin cancers. If caught early, the majority of people do well. However, some SCCs can behave aggressively and have

## MEET THE EXPERT



**Dr Juber Hafiji is a consultant dermatologist and surgeon, as well as a leading expert in the Mohs technique of micrographic surgery**

An active member of the British Society for Dermatological Surgery, Juber Hafiji is regularly invited to speak on his speciality. His main clinical interests are in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer.

He is an expert in Mohs, the gold-standard surgery that offers the highest cure rate. 'It involves removing the tumour bit by bit, as well as a small area of skin around it. This minimises removal of healthy tissue and reduces scarring,' he explains.

the potential to spread. They can occur on any part of your body, but are most common on areas exposed to the sun.

Cutaneous malignant melanoma is a cancer of the pigment cells of the skin. Most people have between 10 and 50 harmless moles. However, beware – because many melanomas start as

minor changes in the size, shape or colour of an existing mole; others begin as a new mole. Melanomas may not cause any symptoms at all, but tingling or itching may occur at an early stage.

If you are at all concerned, see your GP and, if your doctor has any doubt, you'll be referred to a dermatologist. That specialist will decide what action to take.

## Preventative steps

The good news is that you can do a lot to protect yourself and your family from skin cancer, or catch it early so it can be treated effectively.

Simply staying in the shade is one of the best ways to limit your UV exposure. If you are going to be in the sun, Slip! Slop! Slap! Wrap! – Slip on a shirt; Slop on sunscreen; Slap on a hat and, finally, Wrap on sunglasses to protect the skin, particularly the eyes and rest of the face.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dr Hafiji has private practices in Kent at the BMI Chaucer Hospital, Canterbury, Spencer Private Hospitals and The One Hospital, Ashford  
Call **01227 764668**  
Visit [doverstreetdoctors.org.uk](http://doverstreetdoctors.org.uk)

