

Frequently Asked Questions

Is Skin Cancer Preventable?

Mostly. Sunscreen causes a massive reduction in most skin cancers. Although UV light has been shown to cause Melanoma, **sunscreen has not been shown to reduce Melanoma.** Since this is the most deadly skin cancer, if you are not sure about your moles, see your GP.

Can I use Liquid Nitrogen on myself?

Many Zimbabwean farmers treat themselves and their friends for skin cancer. While this may be safe in some cases, it cannot be recommended. Never treat pigmented spots this way because they may be Melanoma. Liquid nitrogen is contra indicated for Melanoma because it makes diagnosis difficult and does not cure it.

Do Herbal and Alternative Medicines work on Skin Cancer?

Herbal remedies may work in early skin cancer. Kigelia certainly reverses sun damage in pre-cancerous lesions. However, because Melanoma and some other skin diseases are so deadly it is wise to have your skin checked by a doctor before relying on alternative approaches.

Test Your Knowledge!

Sunscreen prevents acne and aging **T F**

Sunscreen decreases all kinds of skin cancer **T F**

Dark skinned people can get skin cancer. **T F**

Skin Cancer is often fatal. **T F**

Only certain kinds of Skin Cancer are Fatal **T F**

A cancerous cell grows too big **T F**

A Cancerous Cell may produce hormones **T F**

Liquid Nitrogen is safe treatment for all skin cancers **T F**

Alternative therapy may be effective in some kinds of skin cancer. **T F**

It is safe to watch Melanoma for 6 weeks **T F**

Skin Cancer

Are You Cancer Smart?



Answers T F T F T F T F T F

Know Your Cancer!
Some hints and tips to get you cancer smart this summer.

What is Cancer?

When cells start to divide and multiply uncontrollably, they are said to be cancerous.

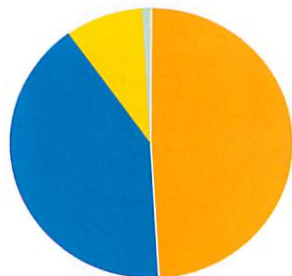
Initially the cells look similar to their parent cells, but as they multiply faster and faster they begin to look different. They are now said to be *dysplastic*, or *anaplastic*.

This fast growth leads to loss of weight, organ failure and possibly peculiar distant symptoms like Diabetes or altered periods.

What is Skin Cancer?

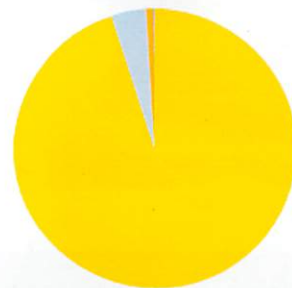
Skin Cancer is the most common kind of cancer in the world. Skin is made of various types of cells, 3 of which form common Skin Cancers

- Squamous cells form *Squamous Cell Carcinoma*
- Basal cells form *Basal Cell Carcinoma*
- Melanocytes form *Melanoma*



Incidence / Frequency

- Squamous Cell
- Basal Cell
- Melanoma
- Other



Mortality

- Melanoma
- Other
- Squamous Cell
- Basal Cell

What is the difference between Skin Cancer and Melanoma?

Skin Cancer has many forms. Melanoma is simply a form, which, if left untreated, is likely to be fatal.

What Causes Skin Cancer?

Sun Damage

- This is the **ONLY** preventable factor.
- This is very important in the development of Squamous Cell Carcinoma and Basal Cell Carcinoma
- Your risk of developing Skin Cancer as a result of sun exposure is worse if you are a light skinned person
- Your Risk of developing Melanoma is greater if you have moved from Europe to a sunny climate after your 19th birthday.
- Remember - intermittent sun exposure is the most dangerous for Melanoma.

Genetic Factors

- This is the most important risk factor for Melanoma. See our Melanoma Brochure for more details.
- Albinism is associated with huge incidence of Basal Cell Carcinoma and Squamous Cell Carcinoma.
- Less common in dark skinned people

Chronic Ulcers

- Chronic irritation can lead to a chronic ulcer that can ultimately lead to skin cancer.

Recognising Skin Cancer?

- A new spot has appeared on your skin.
- You have a mole or brown spot / freckle that is itching oozing or growing.
- You have a painless ulcer with raised edges.
- You have a scratch that won't heal.
- You have an irregular itchy, scaly area that gets worse in the sun.
- You have an existing rash that changes and no longer responds to treatment.

What To Do

- Photograph the lesion with your camera.
- See your doctor, a dermatologist or dermoscopist.
- Remember - only excision or a Biopsy is 100% reliable.
- For more information, contact your GP, or call the following



Prevention

- **Sunscreen** plays an important part in decreasing your risk of developing most types of Skin Cancers, especially in children.
- **Mole Mapping and Digital Mole Analysis** is the best way of detecting early change, therefore it is the most reliable way of diagnosing Melanoma before it becomes lethal. Mole Mapping is easily available in Zimbabwe and South Africa. For further information, ask your doctor.



Treatment of Skin Cancer

Squamous Cell Carcinoma

- Liquid Nitrogen (freezing)
- Creams such as Kigelia (from the sausage tree). These are available from any chemist.
- PDT (Photodynamic Therapy)
- Aldara
- Effudix
- Excision

Basal Cell Carcinoma

- Liquid Nitrogen (freezing)
- PDT (Photodynamic Therapy)

Melanoma

- Early and extensive excision
- Thorough follow-up with a specialist, or a GP with an interest in Melanoma.

Others

- This depends on the cause of the cancer
- Excision, and/or Chemotherapy, and/or Radiotherapy.

Remember: Skin Cancer Harms, but Melanoma KILLS!

Please see our Melanoma Brochure for more details...