Are you safe in the sun?
A skin cancer information leaflet for men.
About skin cancer

There are two main types of skin cancer. Non-melanoma skin cancers are linked to life-long exposure to the sun and are more common amongst older people and outdoor workers. Malignant melanoma affects younger people too, and it is thought that even a single incidence of severe sunburn can trigger this disease later in life. If not detected and treated early enough, malignant melanoma can be fatal. Over 40,000 people are diagnosed with skin cancer every year in the UK. Around 10% of these will have malignant melanoma. As both types of skin cancer are linked to excessive exposure to the sun, you can reduce the risk by reducing your exposure.

Are you Safe in the Sun?

The number of men getting skin cancer continues to rise. Yet while the medical advice is very clear - reduce your exposure to the sun to reduce your risk of developing skin cancer - many men are not taking adequate steps to protect themselves in the sun. Are you safe in the sun?

Sun protection is not just for holidays

You can burn in the UK even on a cloudy day. You are at greater risk if you are fair skinned and burn easily, but everyone should take steps to prevent sunburn. Skin that is sensitive and exposed less often to the sun burns more easily. When men develop skin cancer it often appears on the face and neck, or back. If your hair is thinning (or has thinned) you need to be particularly careful to protect your scalp and ears as well as your face and neck.

Sun protection whatever you are doing

Whether you are working, playing sport or gardening, you are still exposed to the sun. You may have no choice about being outdoors, but you do have a choice about protecting your skin. Resist the temptation to strip off when working in the heat, and remember you can burn even on a cloudy day. Cover-up with a t-shirt and apply high-factor broad spectrum sunscreen on exposed skin. Wear a hat, and take lunch-breaks in the shade.

Sun protection is not just about sun-creams

Your goal should be to reduce your exposure to harmful UV rays. This means avoiding the sun between 11am-3pm, and covering up with clothing, and a hat. Protect your eyes with sunglasses. Used properly, high-factor broad spectrum sunscreens will protect exposed skin from burning. Use a sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, and re-apply regularly. Remember, relying on creams to prolong the time you spend outside can increase your overall exposure to the sun. Try to seek shade, and cover-up as well.

Early detection saves lives

Whatever your age, you should be vigilant for signs of skin cancer. Melanomas can often be identified by a change in the look or feel of a skin mole or by the appearance of a new mole. Check your skin regularly and make sure you show any change to your nurse or doctor.

Remember malignant melanoma is relatively rare and a change in the appearance of a mole does not mean you definitely have cancer.

If a doctor is concerned about any change, the mole may be removed by a simple operation under local anaesthetic. Follow up visits may be required.