

# Melanoma: assessment and management

Information for the public

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[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

## Melanoma: the care you should expect

Melanoma, a type of skin cancer, is the third most common cancer in the UK. It develops when skin cells called melanocytes have a genetic change (mutation) that causes them to grow faster than they should. These mutations are mostly caused by damage from sunlight.

Melanomas are more common in paler skin than darker skin. They are also more common in older people, people who spend a lot of time in sunlight, and people who sunburn easily or have a lot of moles. It is important to find and treat melanoma early because it can spread through the skin and to other parts of the body.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with melanoma by making sure that:

- people get good information and support to help them discuss their treatment and care with their healthcare professional
- people have the most accurate tests to identify the type of melanoma they have
- the most suitable treatments are offered based on the type of melanoma and the person's preferences
- people get regular follow-up after treatment to check that the melanoma has not returned or spread.

## Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any treatment or care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the treatment or care that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your day to day life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your health professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

## Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about melanoma.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Melanoma Focus](#), 0808 801 0777
- [Melanoma UK](#), 0808 171 2455
- [Cancer Research UK](#), 0808 800 4040
- [Macmillan Cancer Support](#), 0808 808 00 00
- [Skcin](#), 0115 981 9116

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by melanoma and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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