

How can I prevent skin cancer?

The best way to prevent skin cancer is to spend less time in the sun.

Steps you can take to prevent skin cancer are to:



SLIP on clothes with sleeves and a collar.



SLOP on broad-spectrum, water resistant SPF 30+ sunscreen – apply 15 to 20 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply every two hours.



SLAP on a broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire hat.



SEEK shade when you are outdoors.



SLIDE on sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067:2003 and fit close to the face.

ADDITIONALLY, reduce your time in the sun between 10am and 3pm, and avoid using solariums.

Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. One in two Queenslanders will develop skin cancer at some time during their life and about 300 Queenslanders die from melanoma each year.

Skin cancer is predominantly caused by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Avoiding overexposure to UV radiation is the key to preventing skin cancer. Fortunately, most skin cancers can be cured if they are found and treated early.



Where can I have my skin spots checked?



For information and support call Monday to Friday, 8am - 6pm

www.cancerqld.org.au

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Where can I have my skin spots checked?

If detected at an early stage, 95 per cent of all skin cancers can be cured. Cancer Council Queensland encourages everyone to have their skin checked by a doctor every 12 months. It's also important to know your skin and be aware of any new skin spots that appear, sores that do not heal or moles that change in colour, shape or size. It is important to have all changes to your skin examined either by your general practitioner or a specialized skin cancer clinic doctor, either of these health professionals can accurately check your skin and diagnose potential skin cancers.

GP's and skin cancer clinics can be found in the Yellow Pages under Medical Practitioners.

For information about skin cancer, or support and referrals, please contact the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 between 8am - 6pm, Monday to Friday.

Should I check my own skin?

Cancer Council Queensland recommends that people check their whole body every three to six months.

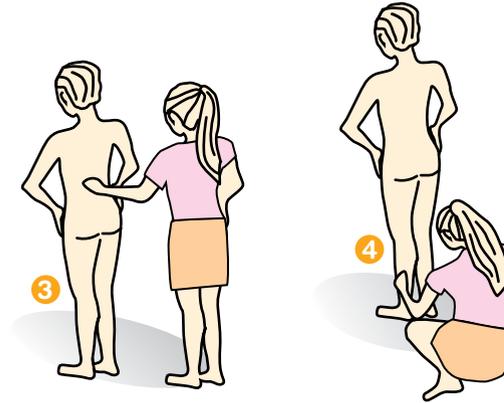
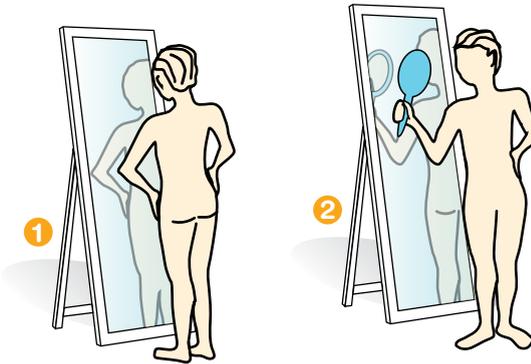
Be aware of what is normal for your skin so that you can pick up any changes at an early stage.

If you are unsure about your own level of skin cancer risk, talk to your doctor.

How do I check my skin?

With a bit of practice most people can complete a whole body skin check in about 15 minutes. It is important that you undress completely and make sure you have good lighting. Use a full-length mirror and a hand-held mirror to check the areas you can't see easily, or ask a family member or friend to help.

Diagrams 1-2 are examples of a person using a full length mirror and hand-held mirror to check their own skin.



Diagrams 3-4 are examples of two people checking skin.

When should I have my skin checked by a doctor?

It is important to have your skin checked by a doctor immediately if you notice any of the following:

- A spot, freckle or mole that looks different or you are unsure about.
- New or old spots on the skin that have changed in size, shape or colour or are itching.
- A sore that does not heal.

People with a high risk of skin cancer should undergo regular whole body skin checks. This includes people who:

- Have a family or previous history of skin cancer or melanoma and/or a large number of moles.
- Are aged over 50 with white skin that burns rather than tans.
- Are immunosuppressed (for example, people who have undergone a kidney, heart or lung transplant) or have xeroderma pigmentosa (a rare genetic disease where a person is highly sensitive to sunlight and is prone to developing multiple skin cancers).

Who should check my skin?

If you have a suspicious spot or just want to get your skin checked then there are a number of doctors you can visit including:

Your own general practitioner (GP)

Your own GP can perform a skin check. This could be combined with a general health check, which may include screening for some other cancers. Your GP can also examine any skin lesions you are concerned about and treat them if needed, or if appropriate, refer for specialised care.

A doctor at a skin cancer clinic

Skin cancer clinics, usually staffed by GPs, conduct skin checks and diagnose and treat suspicious skin lesions. There are many skin clinics available offering a variety of services and fee arrangements.

A specialist

If you would like a second opinion you can ask your GP or skin cancer clinic doctor to refer you to a specialist such as a dermatologist. Your GP may also suggest you see a specialist.

Don't forget to check your:

- Head, scalp, neck and ears.
- Chest, back and sides.
- The space between the toes, under the toenails, soles of the feet and palms of the hands.

What should I ask my doctor?

When you visit, remember to ask your doctor to check the skin on your whole body. Below is a guide to some other questions you may like to ask your doctor:

1. Qualifications and experience

- Ask about the types of services offered by the GP or skin cancer clinic.
- Some GPs and skin cancer clinic doctors have additional qualifications, skills and experience in the diagnosis and management of skin cancer.
- Ask if the doctors who perform skin checks are members or fellows of any professional organisations such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

2. Costs

Some GPs and skin cancer clinics bulk bill for the initial consultation, while others require upfront payment.

- Ask about the costs of the initial consultation and any additional treatment that may be required.
- If you are in a private health fund, check if any of the procedures are covered by your plan.
- Some doctors use technology that involves computer-assisted scanning and store images of your spots for future comparison. Ask if there is a fee for storing images and for follow-up appointments.

3. Diagnosis and treatment

If you are told you have skin cancer, make sure you ask:

- What type of skin cancer you have?
- Do you need treatment immediately?
- What are the treatment options available, and the benefits and risks of each option?
- Will the doctor treat you or will you need to be referred to a dermatologist or another specialist (if you have not already seen one)? Most skin cancers are treated in general practice or skin cancer clinics and do not need specialist treatment. However, you are always entitled to a second opinion or referral to a specialist for treatment if you wish.
- If attending a doctor other than your regular GP, will your regular GP be provided with the results of the consultation?

4. Information and follow-up

Once you have had your skin checked, the doctor should also provide you with information about skin cancer prevention and any follow-up you may require. Remember to ask for:

- Results of any test you have had.
- Information about skin cancer.
- Information about prevention and sun protection.
- Information about checking your own skin.
- A reminder letter about future skin checks.