



## SKIN CANCER

### Queensland<sup>1,2</sup>

- ✦ 3,649 Queenslanders were diagnosed with a melanoma of the skin in 2013 (the latest figures available), with 390 dying from the disease.
- ✦ Of the 3,649 diagnosed, 2,140 were male and 1,509 were female.
- ✦ In 2013, melanoma was the second leading form of cancer diagnosed in men and women, excluding non-melanoma skin cancers.
- ✦ In 2013, 61 Queenslanders died from other skin cancers, excluding BCC and SCC of the skin.
- ✦ Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.
- ✦ The approximate lifetime risk of a Queensland male to be diagnosed with melanoma before the age of 85 is one in 10, and for females it is one in 17.
- ✦ Compared to the general population, 93% of people diagnosed with melanoma will survive for at least 5 years (91% of men and 95% of women).
- ✦ Number of non-melanoma skin cancer cases (estimated 2013 data): 324,272 (37 per cent of Australian total, despite only 21 per cent of population).<sup>3</sup>

### Australia<sup>3,4,5</sup>

- ✦ Skin cancers are the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia.
- ✦ An estimated 869,000 non-melanoma skin cancers were removed in 2013, corresponding to around 2380 skin cancers every day.
- ✦ Mortality is low, with 592 Australians (416 males, 176 females) dying from non-melanoma skin cancer in 2013.
- ✦ There were about 99,000 hospital separations due to non-melanoma skin cancer in Australia during 2012-2013.
- ✦ More than 12,000 Australians are diagnosed with melanoma each year (2012 data).
- ✦ More than 1,600 Australians die from melanoma each year (2013 data).
- ✦ Although the number of Australians diagnosed with both melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer are increasing, the increase is much slower among people aged <55 years.

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Cancer Registry. 2015. *Cancer in Queensland: Incidence, Mortality, Survival and Prevalence 1982-2013*. Brisbane: QCR, Queensland Health and Cancer Council Queensland.

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Cancer Statistics On-Line, 2016. Viertel Cancer Research Centre, Cancer Council Queensland ([www.cancerqld.org.au/research/gcsoi](http://www.cancerqld.org.au/research/gcsoi)). Based on data released by the Queensland Cancer Registry (1982-2013; released December 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Fransen M, Karahalios A, Sharma N, English DR, Giles GG, Sinclair RD, 2012. Non-melanoma skin cancer in Australia. *Med J Aust* 2012; 197: 565-568. doi: 10.5694/mja12.10654

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014. *Cancer in Australia: an overview, 2014*. Cancer series no 90, Cat. No. CAN 88. Canberra: AIHW

<sup>5</sup> Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2014. *ACIM (Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality) books: Melanoma of the skin* (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/acim-books/>). Canberra: AIHW.



## Types of skin cancer<sup>6</sup>

There are three main types of skin cancer:

1. **Melanoma** – Melanoma is the rarest, yet most dangerous form of skin cancer. It can appear at any age and on any area of the body, not only those exposed to the sun. The first sign of a melanoma is usually a change in a freckle or mole, or the appearance of a new spot on normal skin. There may be a change in size, shape or colour of a spot and the surface texture may change. Early detection is vital.
2. **Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)** – SCCs arise from the cells above the basal layer of the epidermis. They grow more rapidly than BCCs and may become larger over a number of months. SCCs usually appear as a flat, scaly area that gradually thickens. Bleeding and ulceration may occur and the area could feel tender. SCCs predominantly occur on the head and neck, hands and forearms, trunk and lower limbs. These cancers may spread to other parts of the body if not treated.
3. **Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)** – BCCs are the most common but least dangerous form of skin cancer and the most easily treated. They are a malignant tumour formed in the basal cell layer of the skin. They usually appear as a small, rounded lump with a pearly edge and a few visible blood vessels. Other symptoms include bleeding and a sore which will not heal. BCCs occur mainly in exposed areas such as the head and neck, upper trunk and the limbs.

## Prevention and detection<sup>6,7</sup>

- ✦ In Queensland, the UV index is usually 3 or higher throughout the year, even in winter. Queenslanders should protect their skin from the sun all year round.
- ✦ Cancer Council Queensland recommends the use of all the following sun protection measures:
  - Seek shade provided by trees, buildings or temporary shade structures wherever possible;
  - Wear suitable clothing that covers as much skin as possible, for example, shirts with long sleeves and high necks/collars. Clothes that are dark in colour and fabrics with a close weave provide the most effective form of sun protection;
  - Hats with a broad-brim or in a legionnaire or bucket style provide the best coverage protecting the face, neck and ears. Hats should be of a dark colour under the brim to minimise reflection and a close fabric weave is also recommended;
  - Wearing sunglasses minimises the risk of eye damage from ultraviolet radiation. Ensure they are a close-fitting wrap-around style that meet the Australian Standard. Sunglasses sold in Australia must conform to the Australian Standard AS/NZ 2604:201218; and
  - SPF30 or higher broad-spectrum water resistant sunscreen should be applied 20 minutes before going out in the sun and reapplied every two hours.

<sup>6</sup>Cancer Council Australia. Skin Cancer Statistics and Issues. Sydney: Cancer Council Australia. Retrieved December 2014 from: [http://wiki.cancer.org.au/skincancerstats/Skin\\_Cancer\\_Statistics\\_and\\_Issues](http://wiki.cancer.org.au/skincancerstats/Skin_Cancer_Statistics_and_Issues)

<sup>7</sup> Queensland Cancer Fund 2007, SunSmart Information Sheet, Queensland Cancer Fund.



- ✦ It is important that Queenslanders regularly examine their skin for signs of skin cancer, especially if they are in the older age group and/or have sun-damaged skin or multiple moles and freckles.<sup>6,7</sup>

## Who is at risk?

- ✦ People most at risk of skin cancer are:
  - People with fair skin and blue eyes (they have the least amount of melanin);
  - People with a lot of outdoors exposure – such as farm workers, construction workers and people working on fishing boats;
  - Urban indoor workers who spend weekends or holidays in the sun;
  - People who were sunburnt or had high levels of exposure to the sun as children (exposure to sun in childhood and adolescence does the most damage).<sup>7</sup>
- ✦ Whilst some people have a greater risk than others do, it is important to understand that everyone is at risk of skin cancer.

## General Information

- ✦ Skin cancer occurs when the UV light in sunlight damages the DNA in skin, causing cells to mutate and grow into cancers.<sup>7</sup>
- ✦ Skin cancers (including melanomas) are predominantly caused by overexposure to ultraviolet radiation.
- ✦ Solariums can emit UV radiation up to five times as strong as the summer midday sun.<sup>8</sup>
- ✦ The most common form of skin cancer is basal cell carcinoma, which accounts for about 75 per cent of all skin cancers. Squamous cell carcinoma accounts for 20 per cent and melanoma less than five per cent.<sup>9</sup>

For more information about skin cancer, please call the Cancer Council on 13 11 20.

**Disclaimer:** The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for advice from a properly qualified medical professional who can advise you about your own individual medical needs. It is not intended to constitute medical advice and is provided for general information purposes only. Information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community.

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<sup>8</sup> Standards Australia 2002, AS/NZA 2635:2002 Solaria for Cosmetic Purposes, Canberra.

<sup>9</sup>The Cancer Council South Australia 2006, *Skin Cancer*. Retrieved September 2006 from <http://www.cancersa.org.au>