



SKIN CANCER

Queensland^{1,2}

- ✦ Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.
- ✦ 3666 Queenslanders were diagnosed with a melanoma of the skin in 2014 (the latest figures available), with 315 dying from the disease.
- ✦ Of the 3666 diagnosed, 2179 were male and 1487 were female.
- ✦ In 2014, melanoma was the second leading form of cancer diagnosed in men and women, excluding non-melanoma skin cancers.
- ✦ In 2014, 55 Queenslanders died from other skin cancers, excluding Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) and Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) of the skin.
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ On average, people diagnosed with skin cancer were 93 per cent as likely to live for another five years compared to the general population (91 per cent for men and 95 per cent for women)
- ✦ Number of non-melanoma skin cancer cases (estimated 2014 data): 343,057 (37 per cent of Australian total).³

Australia^{3,4,5,6}

- ✦ Skin cancers are the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia.
- ✦ An estimated 903,766 non-melanoma skin cancers were treated in 2014, corresponding to around 2476 skin cancers every day³.
- ✦ Mortality is low. There were 600 (391 males, 209 females) deaths from non-melanoma skin cancer reported in 2014 which included BCC and SCCs.
- ✦ There were about 109,060 hospital separations due to non-melanoma skin cancer in Australia during 2014-2015.
- ✦ More than 12,000 Australians are diagnosed with melanoma each year (2013 data).
- ✦ More than 1,400 Australians die from melanoma each year (2014 data).
- ✦ The number of Australians diagnosed with both melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer are increasing except for those aged <40 years.

¹ Queensland Cancer Registry, 2017. Unpublished data (1982-2014).

² Queensland Cancer Statistics On-Line, 2017. Viertel Cancer Research Centre, Cancer Council Queensland (<http://qcsol.cancerqld.org.au/>). Based on data released by the Queensland Cancer Registry (1982-2014; released January 2017).

³ 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

⁴ Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2017. *Cancer in Australia 2017*. Cancer series no 101, Cat. No. CAN 100. Canberra: AIHW

⁵ Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2017. *ACIM (Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality) books: Melanoma of the skin* (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/acim-books/>). Canberra: AIHW.

⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. *Skin cancer in Australia*. Cat. no. CAN 96. Canberra: AIHW.



General Information^{7,8,9}

- ✳ Skin cancer occurs when skin cells are damaged, for example, by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun⁷.
- ✳ We don't feel UV radiation. It is the invisible part of sunlight that causes tanning, sunburn and skin damage.
- ✳ Solariums are another source of UV radiation, however these are now banned for commercial use in all states and territories of Australia. Solariums can emit UV radiation equivalent to a high UV index of 12, similar to the midday summer sun in the tropics.⁸
- ✳ Anyone can be at risk of developing skin cancer, though the risk increases as you get older due to cumulative UV radiation exposure⁹.

Types of skin cancer

There are three main types of skin cancer:

1. **Melanoma¹⁰** – 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. Often melanoma has no symptoms, however, the first sign is generally a change in an existing mole, or the appearance of a new spot. There may be a change in size, shape, colour, elevation, itching or bleeding of a spot. Other symptoms can include dark areas under nails or on membranes lining the mouth, vagina or anus. It is important to note that new moles and spots will appear and change during childhood, adolescence and during pregnancy and this is normal. However, adults who develop new spots, or who notice changes to existing spots, should have them examined by a doctor. Early detection is vital.
2. **Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)¹¹** – 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 parts of the body most often exposed to the sun, such as the head, neck, hands, forearms and lower limbs. These cancers may spread to other parts of the body if not treated.
3. **Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)¹¹** – 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 pearly lump or a scaly, dry area that is pale or bright pink in colour and shiny. They may bleed and become inflamed, and dead tissue may ulcerate. Some heal and then break down again. BCCs occur mainly in exposed areas such as the head and neck and upper body.

⁷Cancer Council. *Skin Cancer*. <http://www.cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/sun-protection/about-skin-cancer.html>

⁸ Cancer Council. *UV radiation*: http://wiki.cancer.org.au/skincancerstats/UV_radiation. In: Cancer Council Australia. *Skin Cancer Statistics and Issues*. Sydney: Last modified October 2016 [cited 2017 Mar 28].

⁹Cancer Council. *Skin Cancer Stats & Issues – Risk factors/epidemiology*. http://wiki.cancer.org.au/skincancerstats/Risk_factors/epidemiology

¹⁰ Cancer Council. *Skin Cancer – Melanoma*. <http://www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/types-of-cancer/skin-cancer/melanoma.html>

¹¹Cancer Council Queensland. *Skin Cancer – Information and symptoms of skin cancer*. <https://cancerqld.org.au/cancer-information/types-of-cancer/skin-cancer/>



Prevention and detection^{8,9,12}

- ✦ In Queensland, the UV index is usually 3 or higher throughout the year, even in cooler weather. Queenslanders should protect their skin from the sun all year round.
- ✦ Cancer Council Queensland recommends the use of a combination of sun protection measures:
 - Slip on protective 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. If used for swimming, use clothing that is made from materials such as lycra, which stays sun protective when wet.
 - Slap on SPF30+ or higher broad-spectrum water resistant sunscreen. This should be applied liberally 20 minutes before going out in the sun and reapplied every two hours.
 - Slap on a hat with a broad-brim or in a legionnaire or bucket style, as they provide the best protection for the face, neck and ears. Hats should be of a dark colour under the brim to minimise reflection and a close fabric weave.
 - Seek shade provided by trees, built structures or temporary shade structures wherever possible, or bring own pop-up tent or umbrella.
 - Slide on sunglasses that are a close-fitting wrap-around style that meet the Australian Standard AS1067 and provide an Eye Protection Factor (EPF) of 9 or above. Wearing appropriate sunglasses minimises the risk of eye damage from ultraviolet radiation.

It is important that Queenslanders become familiar with their skin, and talk to a doctor immediately about any changes.

What are the risk factors¹¹?

- ✦ Anyone can develop skin cancer, however the risk is higher in people who have:
 - Unprotected exposure to the sun.
 - A history of childhood tanning and sunburn.
 - Pale, fair or freckled skin, especially if it burns easily and doesn't tan.
 - Light coloured eyes and fair or red hair.
 - Lots of moles.
 - Moles with irregular shape and uneven colour.
 - A previous melanoma or other type of skin cancer.
 - A strong family history of melanoma.
 - Experienced short, intense periods of exposure to UV radiation, especially if it caused sunburn.
 - A weakened immune system.

¹²Cancer Council Queensland. *Sun Protection*. <https://cancerqld.org.au/cancer-prevention/understanding-risk/sun-protection/#UV>



Cancer Facts



Information and Support

Cancer Council 13 11 20

Being diagnosed with cancer or supporting a family member or friend can leave you with many questions. By calling 13 11 20 you can speak with an Cancer Support Coordinator, who can provide you with cancer information, emotional and practical support.

Cancer Connect

Sometimes it helps to talk to someone who has been there and knows what you are going through. Cancer Connect is free and confidential peer support that connects you, your carer or loved ones over the telephone with a trained volunteer who has had a similar cancer experience. This support is available at diagnosis, during and after treatment.

Cancer Counselling Service

Cancer can at times leave you feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Talking things through with a counsellor can make a difference.

Our Cancer Counselling Service is for all Queenslanders distressed by cancer at any stage including people diagnosed with cancer, their family and friends. This appointment based service is staffed by nurse counsellors and registered psychologists, all with training and experience in helping people affected by cancer

For more information and support, 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.

Cancer Council Queensland does not warrant that the information in this publication is correct, up to date or complete nor that it is suitable for any particular purpose. Your use of the information in this publication is at your own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, Cancer Council Queensland does not accept any liability for any reliance placed on information that is not correct, complete or up to date, or that is not suited to the purpose for which it was relied upon. If any warranty or guarantee cannot by law be excluded, then, to the extent permitted by law, Cancer Council Queensland's liability for such warranty or guarantee is limited, at Cancer Council Queensland's option, to supplying the information or materials again or paying the cost of having the information or materials.