

## Caring for your skin... Malignant melanoma

**W**e now know that the Australian sun can cause a lot of damage if we don't protect ourselves from it properly. We also know that sunbaking is not healthy and causes our skin to age more quickly. People who want healthy, beautiful skin should protect their skin from the sun's harmful rays and not try to get a tan.

Despite these dangers, many people still do not practise healthy habits. So it is not surprising that the rates of skin cancer in our communities are quite high.

### How do I protect my skin?

- *Wear a hat*
- *Wear a shirt*
- *Apply sunscreen*
- *Avoid exposure to the sun in the hottest part of the day*

### What about children?

Skin cancers can develop from too much sun exposure starting in childhood. So, protecting your children from the sun is extremely important. UV protected all-in-one body suits are a good idea.

### Malignant melanoma

One of the most serious forms of skin cancer is malignant melanoma. It is the third most common form of cancer for men on the NSW North Coast, and the second most common form of cancer for women.

However, in about 80 per cent of cases, this cancer can be cured if it is detected early and treated properly. It is important for you to check yourself regularly for changes in your skin. Always see your GP immediately if you notice anything unusual.

Most people are worried about their moles. They know they should see their GP for a check up if any of their moles become itchy, bleed, get darker, or change in appearance. However, other conditions can cause the skin to itch or bleed also, and not all melanomas are dark in colour.

### Other mole danger signs

- *Irregular shape, colour or edge.*
- *More than 1cm in diameter.*
- *Increase in size*

If any of the above describe your mole, it should be checked by your doctor straight away; it may be showing the features of a malignant melanoma.

### So what can I do to be safe?

Check all your skin for any recent changes. See your GP if you notice any changes. It is a good idea to ask your GP for a total skin check. You might not have noticed potential problems in other parts of your skin, which may be of concern to your doctor.

The golden rule is "if in

doubt, check it out!"

Talk to your family doctor for more information. Remember, untanned skin means beautiful and healthy skin.

