Self Skin Examination Guide

Background

New Zealand has one of the world’s highest rates of skin cancer. Skin cancer can kill, but if it is identified and treated very early, complete cure can almost always be achieved. Additionally, the earlier changes are identified, the smaller the cancer is, and the more minor the required treatment. Using this simple Self Skin Examination guide, you can play a major part in your own early detection. It is easy, quick, and it’s free. You don’t have to be a skin cancer expert – but you will become an expert in your own skin. This knowledge will contribute to your regular dermatologist skin checks.

Your two aims

1. Become familiar with the marks, blemishes and moles on your body, so you know what they look like and can spot any changes
2. Identify any suspicious features that suggest a skin cancer using the pictorial criteria on the following two pages

What you will need

- Good lighting
- Full-length mirror
- 10 minutes set aside without interruption
- Preferably a family member or friend who can examine your back, and any other places you find difficult to see clearly

What to do

- Starting at the top of your head, examine ALL of your skin carefully and systematically right down to the soles of your feet
- Do not forget underarms, underwear areas, between toes and fingers, palms and soles, nails, lips, eyelids, and ears.
- With each mark, blemish or mole, be sure to achieve the two aims above.
- Skin cancer can be grouped into melanoma and non-melanoma types. The two separate tables illustrate the warning signs of each broad type of tumour.

What to do next

- Have any new, suspicious, or changing areas reviewed by your dermatologist promptly
- Repeat this Self Skin Examination 4 times per year (eg the start of each season)
- Encourage your family and friends to perform their own quarterly self-skin examinations and forward them these instructions

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# Melanoma warning signs (ABCDE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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| ASymmetry    | ![Example](image1.png) | • One half looks different from the other  
• Can not be divided into two equal parts |
| Border       | ![Example](image2.png) | • An uneven border  
• A notched, ragged, or blurred edge |
| Colour       | ![Example](image3.png) | • Multiple colours eg black, brown, red, white, bluish areas or dots  
• Not one regular colour throughout |
| Different    | ![Example](image4.png) | • A mole that looks different from all your other moles  
• AKA “the ugly duckling sign” |
| Evolution    | ![Example](image5.png) | • Very important  
• Refers to any mole/spot that is changing in size, shape, colour, elevation, or begins to bleed, itch, or scab |
## Non-melanoma skin cancer warning signs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sign</th>
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| Raised or pearly   | ![Image](image1.jpg) | • A slightly shiny/pearly look  
                   • Often bumpy or more raised around the edges with a central depression  
                   • Often small spider-like blood vessels can been seen on the surface |
| Non-healing        | ![Image](image2.jpg) | • A sore that doesn’t heal and go away (lasting longer than 2 weeks as a guide)  
                   • Often scabby or raw on top |
| Bleeding           | ![Image](image3.jpg) | • Easy bleeding with minimal or no trauma  
                   • Repeat bleeding |
| Growing            | ![Image](image4.jpg) | • Getting bigger with time (even if very slowly)  
                   • The cancer can be very subtle as in this example extending on to the pink part of the lip, but its slow growth indicates need for review |
| Scaling            | ![Image](image5.jpg) | • Scaly or rough top  
                   • May appear wart-like or volcano-like (heaped up with a white hard area in the centre) |
| Change in sensation| ![Image](image6.jpg) | • While most skin cancers are not sore, a change of a patch or bump that becomes sore/tender, itchy, or tingling can be warning sign |