

## **Dermatology, Oncology and Plastic Surgery**

### **Melanoma – Self examination**

Following your treatment for melanoma, you will have regular follow-up appointments either in the Dermatology or Plastic Surgery Department. This is to check the area/scar where your melanoma previously was, the rest of your skin, and your lymph nodes.

This leaflet explains how you can make some of these checks yourself between your follow-up appointments. If you have any queries or concerns about any changes you find, please contact us as soon as possible and we will see you earlier than planned.

There are also YouTube videos that can help with this. If you would find this useful, please speak to your Macmillan skin cancer nursing team.

Depending on the stage of your cancer, the risk of the cancer returning will vary. Whether this risk is high or low, it is still important that you learn how to examine yourself for any signs of the melanoma returning in between your hospital visits.

It is recommended that you do monthly skin self-examinations. If you have had photographs taken, a set will be given to you so that you can use these photographs when looking for changes. Some people find that asking their partner, friend, or relative to check with or for them easier, so they need to be aware of this information too.



## Patient Information

### How to do skin self-examination:

Below are some instructions on how to check your skin.

You need to look and feel for any lumps around:

- the scar of the original melanoma
- the skin around this area
- the skin in between the scar and
- your lymph nodes

It is easier if you start from your head and work down to your feet each time you do your self examination. You should check your skin in a well lit room using a full length mirror and a hand held mirror.

You will gradually get to know your skin so that you become familiar with what is normal for you and learn where your birthmarks, moles, or skin blemishes are, and what they look and feel like.

Scalp	You may need to use a comb or hair dryer to move hair so that you can see your scalp better.
Face	Examine your nose, lips, mouth and behind your ears.
Neck, chest, shoulders, and abdomen	<b>Front:</b> check the neck and chest/breasts.  <b>Back:</b> check the back of your neck, shoulders and upper back.
Back and buttocks	Check your back carefully and the areas between your buttocks

## Patient Information

Arms and hands	Check your forearms, including the undersides and upper arms.  Check the backs of the hands between the fingers and fingernails.
Genitals, legs and feet	Check the front and back of your legs.  Inspect the genital area.  Check the soles of your feet, between the toes and the toenails.
The scar at the original site of the melanoma	Carefully press the scar against the underlying muscle and feel for any unusual lumps and bumps.
Examine the skin around the excision	Look and feel for any unusual lumps and bumps.
The skin between the scar and the lymph nodes	Feel for any unusual lumps and bumps.

### **What else do I need to know?**

Any change in the size, shape or colour of a mole is a significant feature and the fact that it has changed is important and may indicate a mole is becoming active.

Due to you having a previous melanoma, if you notice any of the following signs, please see your doctor as soon as possible. This does not mean your melanoma has returned, but we do need to monitor any of these changes.

## Patient Information

- **Is an existing mole or dark patch getting larger or a new one growing?**

Growth or changes in moles are less common as we get older

- **Does it have a ragged outline?**

Ordinary moles are smooth regular shaped

- **Does it have a mixture of different shades of brown and black?**

Ordinary moles may be dark brown but are all one shade

- **Is the mole inflamed or does it have a reddish edge?**

An ordinary mole is not inflamed

- **Is it bleeding, oozing or crusted?**

Ordinary moles do not do this

- **Is there a change in sensation, like a mild itch?**

An ordinary mole is not usually itchy or painful

- **Is it bigger than all of your other moles?**

You will find self examination easier the more you do this. If you have any problems or are finding this difficult, please contact our Macmillan skin cancer specialist nurses on 024 7696 6085.

## Lymph nodes

Lymph nodes (glands) are part of the lymphatic system which helps us to fight infections, and remove excess fluid and waste products from our body.

The lymphatic system consists of lymph which is a clear colourless fluid which forms in the body and drains into the blood through a network of vessels and lymph nodes.

## Patient Information

The lymph nodes filter out anything our body does not need and are situated in various areas of our body including the armpit, groin, neck or abdomen.

Cancer cells can sometimes move into the lymph fluid and travel to the lymph nodes. This may be noticeable by a swelling of the lymph node. Because of this, we also advise you check your lymph nodes when you check your skin.

Below is a list which explains which lymph node groups need to be checked dependant on where your melanoma originally was.

<b>Site of melanoma</b>	<b>Lymph node group to check</b>
Scalp, head and neck	Side of the neck, under the chin, above the collarbones, behind the ears and the back of the neck
Neck, chest, back and abdomen	Neck above the collarbones, armpits and groins
Arms and hands	Above both collarbones, lower neck and armpits
Genitalia, legs and feet	Groins and behind both knees

The size of the lymph nodes change a little from week to week. For example, a sore throat is often associated with the lymph nodes in your neck becoming swollen and perhaps a little tender, but then they return to normal. We would be concerned if one or more of the nodes feel different from the other side, especially if you know this has lasted for more than a few weeks and if the nodes are not tender.

## Contacts

- Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialists: 024 7696 6058
- Dermatology Reception (Coventry) 024 7696 6313

## Patient Information

- Dermatology (Rugby) 01788 663249

### Further sources of information – Local Services

#### **Cancer Information Centre 024 7696 6052**

Information and support based at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, Main Entrance. This is a free service, which provides information about all aspects of cancer.

Open Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm.

#### **Coventry Benefits Advice Line 024 7683 2000**

Offers advice and information regarding benefits over the telephone. Appointments can be made for a face to face consultation to help complete benefit forms.

### Further sources of information – National Services

- Cancer Research U.K 0808 800 4040 / <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/>
- Changes Faces Tel. 0300 012 0275/ [www.changingfaces.org.uk/](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk/)
- Lets Face it EMAIL: Sandra.smith@lets-face-it.org.uk/ [www.lets-face-it.org.uk](http://www.lets-face-it.org.uk)
- Macmillan Cancer Support 0808 808 0000 / [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)
- Melanoma Focus: 0808 801 0777 / <https://melanomafocus.org/>

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6085 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

#### **Document History**

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