

You can still get a skin cancer in winter!

Doctors see less skin cancers in the winter months, compared to summer. Does that mean our skin produces less skin cancers then? No! In winter, people cover up more and don't look at their skin as much so they don't notice problems.

You can develop a skin cancer at any time of the year, so it is very important to pay attention to signs of possible skin cancer in winter as well as summer.

Melanoma is the most deadly skin cancer. Any change in a mole, such as growing quickly (especially over 3-6 months), itching, bleeding or changing colour (darker or lighter) should be taken seriously. You should see your family doctor quickly.

However there are other, more common skin cancers, known as BCC (basal cell carcinoma) and SCC (squamous cell carcinoma) which you should also look out for. One important clue is a skin spot which bleeds from time to time eg every few weeks, sometimes for no obvious reason. This is a very common sign of BCC. Another sign is a small lump which grows quickly and becomes red and tender. It may look infected but it could be an SCC.

The best way to catch skin cancers early is to check yourself regularly. Put it in your diary to check your own skin every 3 months eg on the first day of the month. Stand in front of a mirror in good light and check all your skin. Ask a member of your household to look at your back and the back of your legs. Remember that the most common site for melanoma in men is the back, and for women it is the lower legs.

If you repeat this check every 3 months you will know your skin and all its spots much better and recognise changes much sooner.

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