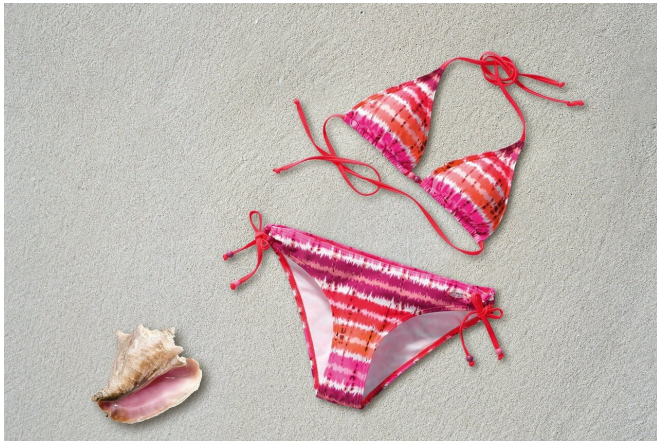


150% surge in skin cancer deaths since 1970s

20 August 2020



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According to figures released by Cancer Research UK, melanoma skin cancer deaths have been increasing dramatically in the UK, with the rate rising two and half times since the 1970s.

And the rise is greater in men than women, with [death rates](#) in men more than three times higher now than they were in the 70s. This could be partly explained by the fact that [incidence rates](#) rose faster in men and they are more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage.

But many of these deaths could be prevented as 86% of cases are linked to too much sun or sunbeds. The risk of developing [melanoma](#) is around three times higher in people who have had sunburn just once every two years. Even reddening of the skin or tenderness is a sign of sun damage.

Ninety-one percent of melanoma patients in England are diagnosed at an early stage, and 91% will survive their disease for five years or more. But since the early 1990s, melanoma incidence rates have more than doubled in the UK—which may

partly explain the surge in deaths.

Michelle Mitchell, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said: "There are many benefits to going outside, felt now more than ever because of sustained periods of lockdown. But something we should all be aware of is sun safety and how to reduce our risk of melanoma. Even though many summer holidays on beaches abroad have come to a halt, you can still get burnt in the UK sun. With rates rising, it's never been more important to stay safe in the sun and contact your GP if you notice any unusual change to your skin."

In the UK around 16,200 people are diagnosed each year with melanoma, making it the fifth most common [cancer](#) in the UK.

Shane McCormick, previously a landscaper in the [construction industry](#) and now a Sales Director for Talasey, was first diagnosed with skin cancer on the base of his back in April 2017. He received treatment and final results came back clear.

Shane was later diagnosed with secondary melanoma in November 2018 and he was told that the melanoma he'd had the previous year had spread. He underwent more treatment which ended in March this year and he'll now have yearly scans for the next five years, of which the first was clear.

Shane said: "I used to be a landscape gardener and I now work with thousands of landscapers and builders. I worked outdoors most of the day alongside my dad who was also in the industry and we didn't really think about covering up or using sunscreen—awareness wasn't like it is today. I used to be out there working with my top off—I changed the way I work because of my experience. Everyone is talking about COVID-19, and it has been beautiful weather lately, but taking care of yourself in the sun is just as important as it's ever been."

"For me this has been a big learning experience. Whilst I can't change it, I can tell my story and stop others from experiencing what I've been through."

A recent YouGov survey published by [Cancer Research UK and its partner NIVEA SUN](#) showed around 4 in 10 UK adults say they have spent more time in the sun since the COVID-19 lockdown started, compared with the same time last year. So, when the sun is strong, it's important to remember three pieces of key advice:

1. Seek shade—when the sun is strongest, between 11am and 3pm in the UK
2. Cover up with clothing—wear a T-shirt, hat and sunglasses
3. Apply sunscreen regularly—with at least SPF15 and four or more stars. Use it generously, re-apply regularly and use in combination with shade and clothing.

More information: For more information, visit: cruk.org/sunsafety

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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