

Living with Melanoma Skin Cancer

A Quick Guide

Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on Living with melanoma skin cancer from our website. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Coping with melanoma
- Caring for your skin after melanoma
- What advanced melanoma is
- Your feelings about advanced cancer
- Coping with the symptoms of advanced cancer
- Questions for your doctor
- Melanoma organisations

You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

Coping with melanoma

Any diagnosis of cancer is difficult to cope with, both practically and emotionally. Most melanomas in the UK are diagnosed when they are at a very early stage and the chance of cure is very high. Many people just have the melanoma removed and need no further treatment. But it can still be a very worrying time. At first, you are likely to feel very upset, frightened and confused. Or you may feel that things are out of your control.

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you also have to work out how to manage practically. You may need time off

work while you are treated. And there may be money worries. Who do you tell that you have cancer? And how do you find the words? There may be children to consider.

The coping with cancer section contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections on your feelings, talking to people about melanoma, helping yourself, getting outside help, sex and sexuality, and financial matters.

Caring for your skin after melanoma

A diagnosis of melanoma means you are at a higher than average risk of having another primary melanoma in the future. You must take care in the sun. The area where the melanoma was should not be exposed to strong sun at all. You should:

- Wear close weave cotton clothing in the sun
- Wear long sleeves and long trousers
- Wear a brimmed hat to protect your face and neck
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes
- Use a high factor sun cream when you are in the sun
- Stay out of the sun altogether between 11am and 3pm
- NEVER use a sun bed

What advanced melanoma is

Advanced melanoma means the cancer has spread from where it started to another part of the body. Your melanoma may have already spread when it was diagnosed. Or it may have come back in another part of the body sometime after your first diagnosis and treatment. Doctors call this recurrent cancer. Cancer that has spread to another part of the body is called secondary cancer or metastases.

What having advanced melanoma means

Having advanced melanoma means that it can't be cured. But treatments are available that can shrink the melanoma or slow its growth. It may be possible to control it for quite a while. You will need to talk very carefully to your own specialist to understand what the diagnosis means for you, what treatment is available, and how treatment may help you.

Sadly, some people are diagnosed with melanoma when it is too far advanced for treatment to be able to control the cancer. If this happens then your doctor will still be able to help control symptoms you may have.

Your feelings about advanced cancer

Being told you have advanced melanoma is understandably shattering. It is a difficult disease to treat once it has spread. But treatments can sometimes control the melanoma for a time. But it is very hard to face the news that your melanoma is not responding to treatment and that it may eventually cause your death. Discovering you have advanced cancer brings up many different feelings. After the first shock it is normal to feel very angry or let down.

The coping with cancer section contains lots of information about coping and where you can get support including support groups and counselling. Coping with the symptoms of advanced cancer. People with advanced melanoma can have different symptoms depending on where in the body it has spread to.

It is possible to control many of the symptoms of advanced melanoma. The best thing you can do is to let your doctors and nurses know if you have any of these symptoms. They are there to help you and want you to be as comfortable as possible. Do talk to them and let them know exactly how you feel. This will help them plan the best symptom management for you.

Questions for your doctor on living with melanoma

- How will my treatment affect me long term?
- What changes should I make to my life style?
- Can I still go abroad on holiday?
- How can I protect my skin in the sun?
- Should my children take special care in the sun?
- Where can I get help with claiming benefits and grants?
- Why did this happen to me?
- Can anyone help me cope with my anxiety about the melanoma coming back?
- Where can I get help dealing with my feelings?
- Can I have counselling?
- Do I have to pay for counselling?
- Could you refer me to a specialist nurse?

Melanoma organisations

Cancer Research UK

Main website: www.cancerresearchuk.org

Patient information

website: <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808 800 4040

MARCS Line Resource Centre

(Melanoma and Related Cancer of the Skin)

Phone: 01722 415071

Website: www.wessexcancer.org

Email: marcsline@salisbury.nhs.uk

This is a telephone advice line for anyone affected by melanoma or skin cancer and their families and friends.

Melanoma Genetics Consortium

Website: www.genomel.org

Phone: 0113 206 6527

Email: info@genomel.org

A website with information about the research consortium with interactive materials about melanoma for medical professionals, melanoma patients and their families, and the general public.

Notes

For more information, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/cancerhelp>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on 0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in May 2012. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. Copyright Cancer Research UK 2012. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and in the Isle of Man (1103)