

Factsheet

„Skin cancer and how you can protect yourself from it.“ (as of April 2020)

Skin cancer is a malignant skin change that can occur in various forms.¹ The most dangerous of these is melanoma, also known as black skin cancer.² Many forms of skin cancer can usually be well cured if diagnosed in time¹. According to information from the Cancer League 2800 people contract melanoma every year in Switzerland. It is the fifth most common type of cancer that can also affect younger people: circa 25% of people with melanoma are younger than 50 years of age at the time diagnosed.²

About melanoma³

Melanoma arises from the pigment-producing cells of the skin, the melanocytes, and can occur in any part of the skin. Melanomas can look different and develop over several months or years. They often appear as dark to black spots, which can be flat or raised. Melanomas can also develop from existing moles.

Risk factors

The following factors can increase the risk of developing melanoma³:

- More than 100 moles on the body
- Intensive sun exposure with sunburn
- Former skin cancers
- Occurrence of melanoma in the family
- Immunosuppression (e.g. weakened immune system due to illness).

UV radiation is considered one of the main causes of skin cancer.²

Prevention and early detection

- Protect your skin from sunlight! In general applies:^{2,4}
- Stay in the shade between 11am and 3pm.
- Protect your body with hat, sunglasses and clothing.
- Apply sufficient sunscreen (SPF 25 or higher) 30 minutes before sun exposure.
- Cream your skin several times a day when you are swimming or sweating.
- Avoid visits to the tanning booth. They also damage the skin.
- Protect also your children's skin.

Pay attention to changes in the skin and consult a doctor if any changes occur. If a mole changes or differs significantly in shape or color from the others a dermatologist should examine it.

Therapy

If possible, a melanoma should be surgically removed.² If the disease is already at an advanced stage, additional immunotherapy or chemotherapy may be necessary.² Thanks to medical research and continuous efforts to improve treatment options, great medical progress has been made in the treatment of melanoma in recent years.

References:

1. <http://www.dermatologie.usz.ch/fachwissen/Hautkrebs/Seiten/default.aspx>, last access 22.4.2020
2. <https://www.krebsliga.ch/ueber-krebs/krebsarten/hautkrebs-melanom-schwarzer-hautkrebs/>, last access 22.4.2020
3. <https://shop.krebsliga.ch/files/kls/webshop/PDFs/deutsch/melanom-011085012111.pdf>, last access 22.4.2020
4. <https://my.derma.ch/spec/melanoma/Patienten/8.html>, last access 22.4.2020