



# CANCER AUSTRALIA

## Skin Cancer

### Definition

- The epidermis or top layer of skin contains three different types of cells: squamous cells, basal cells and melanocytes. The three main types of skin cancer named after the type of cells they start from: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma, along with several rare forms of skin cancer, are referred to collectively as nonmelanoma skin cancer.

### Incidence and mortality

- Skin cancers account for 80 per cent of all newly diagnosed cancers and one in two Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world.
- In 2006, melanoma was the fourth most common cancer in Australia, accounting for 9.9 per cent of all new cancer cases.
- There were 10,326 new cases of melanoma: 6,051 were male and 4,275 were female.
- The lifetime risk of developing melanoma before the age of 75 is 1 in 28 – 1 in 23 for males and 1 in 35 for females.
- In 2007, 1,279 Australians died from melanoma, accounting for 3.2 per cent of all cancer-related deaths. More males died from melanoma than females (864 and 415 respectively).
- It is estimated that in 2010, around 451,000 new cases of non-melanoma skin cancers will be diagnosed in Australia. In 2007, 448 Australians died from non-melanoma skin cancer. Mandatory reporting is not required for non-melanoma skin cancers so numbers are estimated by national surveys.

### Trends

- The incidence of melanoma has been increasing over the last 20 years (increase of 68 per cent), however mortality rates have remained relatively stable. The increase in incidence is largely attributable to a rise of melanoma cases in males (over 100 per cent increase in incidence rates in males compared to 34 per cent in females).
- The incidence of melanoma increases with age, particularly from the age of 15 years.

### Relative survival

- 89.7 per cent of individuals affected by melanoma will be alive 5 years after their initial diagnosis.

### Risk factors

- Ultraviolet radiation is the major risk factor for the development of skin cancer.
- Other risk factors include:
  - A family or personal history of melanoma
  - Abnormal moles
  - High number of normal moles
  - Impaired immune system
  - Age.

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