

Patient Information

Suspected Skin Cancer

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask a member of the nursing or medical staff, or call the Dermatology/Skin Cancer Specialist Nurse:

Mihaela Savu

Tel: 01935 384906

Mobile: 07990 776684

or email: mihaela.savu@ydh.nhs.uk

Plastics Secretary

Tel: 01935 384887

Dermatology Secretary

Tel: 01935 384871

***Dermatology
& Plastic Surgery***

www.yeovilhospital.nhs.uk

Skin Cancer - Introduction

Skin cancer is very common in the UK. Finding it early saves lives. Any changes in a mole, freckle or normal patch of skin that occur quickly, i.e. over a few weeks or months should be taken seriously.

Most people with suspected skin cancer are referred to a specialist at their local hospital for advice and treatment.

A specialist in treating skin diseases is called a dermatologist. Your treatment may be carried out by the dermatologist. However, depending on the area of the body affected by the cancer and the type of treatment needed you may also be referred to :

- a general surgeon
- a plastic surgeon
- maxillo-facial surgeon

Often these different doctors all work together and are known as a multidisciplinary team, or MDT. Other staff will be available to help if necessary, such as:

- Specialist nurses who give information and support
- Pathologists who advise on the type and extent of skin cancer
- Social workers
- Counsellors and psychologists

Biopsy

The specialist will be able to tell a great deal from a simple examination of the affected area of skin. However, it is not always possible to tell the difference between skin cancers and benign conditions by examination alone.

You may be advised to have a biopsy. This is a quick and simple procedure which can usually be done in the outpatient department or day surgery unit using a local anaesthetic.

The doctor will remove all or part of the lesion or lump and send it to the laboratory. In the laboratory it will be analysed under a microscope by a pathologist.

Further Tests

Most people with non-melanoma skin cancer will not require any further tests.

Occasionally, CT scans and MRI scans are done as a routine procedure, or if your doctor thinks there is a possibility that the cancer has begun to spread.

It can take 2 - 4 weeks for the results of the biopsy to be ready. A follow-up appointment to give you the results may be arranged before you go home. This waiting period will be an anxious time for you. It may help to talk things over with a close friend or relative.

You can also call your Key Worker/Skin Cancer Nurse Specialist for any concern (see contact details on the back of this leaflet).

Giving Your Consent

Before you give your consent to have any treatment, your doctor will explain its aims to you:

- The type and extent of the treatment you are advised to have
- The advantages and disadvantages of the treatment
- Any other treatments that may be available
- Any significant risks or side effects of the treatment

If you don't understand what you have been told, let the staff know straight away so that they can explain again. Some cancer treatments are complex, so it is not unusual for people to need information repeated.

Remember it is your right to ask your Consultant to send you a copy of his letter to your GP which gives details about your diagnoses and further plan of care.