



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Skin Self-Examination

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Macmillan skin cancer clinical nurse specialist

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Telephone: 01904 721719

Email: yhs-tr.skincancer.cns.team@nhs.net

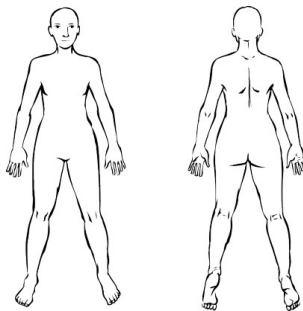
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Why are skin self-examinations important?

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. It often affects adults with a fair complexion who have had a lot of sun exposure and repeated episodes of sunburn over many years.

Skin cancer is also the easiest cancer to cure if it is diagnosed and treated early. However, if it is left it will grow larger, which can result in disfigurement and can be life threatening. This will depend on the type of skin cancer that has been diagnosed.

Please speak to your doctor or skin cancer nurse specialist to ensure you understand what type of skin cancer you have been diagnosed with.



Who should do it?

A skin self-examination can be performed by yourself or your relative/ carer. Your consultant or skin cancer nurse specialist may also have demonstrated how to complete a skin examination. If you have children you can also teach them from an early age how to check their own skin.

When should you do it?

Skin examinations should be done often, but not so you feel it is a chore. For most people monthly is recommended. If you are a person with many moles or dark pigments on the skin, get a relative or friend to take some photographs. This will help you to verify if any changes have occurred. After the first few times, skin examination should take no longer than ten minutes.

Your consultant or nurse specialist may recommend referral to the medical illustrations team for professional photography.

How to do a skin self-examination?

The easiest way to examine your skin is in front of a full-length mirror. You may also use a hand-held mirror to check every inch of your skin.



If you have access to the internet you may wish to view the following video. This video presents a visual step by step demonstration showing how to carry out a full skin self- examination. This video can be found at the following link <https://www.dermnetnz.org/topics/self-skin-examination-video>. [Accessed May 2025]

First check your body at the front and the back then raise both arms to enable you to look at both sides.



Next bend your elbows and have a close look at your forearms and upper underarms. You should also remember to examine your hands including the palms and finger nails.

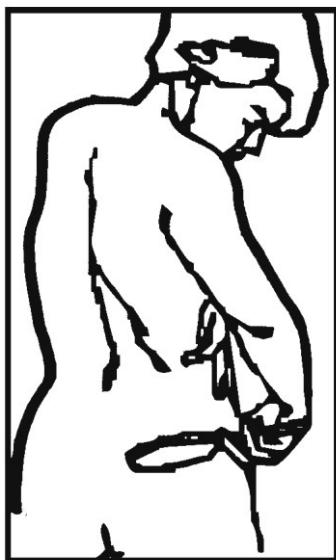
Check the back of your legs and your feet. Do not forget to look in between your toes and on the soles of your feet. You may find it easier to do this whilst you are sitting.



Look at your face, neck and scalp. You may find it useful to use a comb or hair dryer to move your hair so that you can see better.



Finally, use a hand mirror to check your buttock area, and include the genital area as well.



If you check yourself regularly, you will become familiar with what is normal for you. Remember, you are checking for anything new, such as a change in colour, size or texture. Or you might want to look out for any sore that does not heal.

If you require any further support or information in relation to this leaflet, please contact the clinical nurse specialist team on 01904 721719.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Skin cancer clinical nurse specialist, Dermatology specialist nurse office, Corridor A, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE.

Telephone 01904 721719

Email: yhs-tr.skincancer.cns.team@nhs.net.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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