

# Non Melanoma Skin Cancer and Cutaneous Melanoma: A Comprehensive Guide

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the world. In the United States, more than 9,500 people are diagnosed with skin cancer every day. Of these, about 90% are non-melanoma skin cancers (NMSCs) and 10% are cutaneous melanomas (CMs).



## Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer and Cutaneous Melanoma: Surgical Treatment and Reconstruction by Lucinda Berry

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## What is Non Melanoma Skin Cancer?

NMSCs are the most common type of skin cancer. They are usually slow-growing and occur on sun-exposed areas of the skin, such as the face, neck, arms, and legs. NMSCs are often curable if they are treated early.

There are two main types of NMSCs:

- Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common type of NMSC. BCCs are usually slow-growing and appear as pearly or waxy bumps on the skin.

- Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is less common than BCC. SCCs can be slow-growing or fast-growing and appear as red, scaly patches on the skin.

## **What is Cutaneous Melanoma?**

CM is the most serious type of skin cancer. It can occur anywhere on the skin, but it is most common on the back, chest, and legs. CM is more likely to spread to other parts of the body than NMSCs.

CMs can be difficult to diagnose because they can mimic other skin conditions, such as moles. However, there are some warning signs that can help you identify a CM:

- **Asymmetry:** One half of the mole does not match the other half.
- **Border:** The borders of the mole are irregular, ragged, or blurred.
- **Color:** The mole is multicolored or has shades of black, brown, or pink.
- **Diameter:** The mole is larger than 6 millimeters (about the size of a pencil eraser).
- **Evolution:** The mole has changed in size, shape, or color over time.

## **What are the Risk Factors for Non Melanoma Skin Cancer and Cutaneous Melanoma?**

There are several risk factors for NMSCs and CMs, including:

- Fair skin
- Light-colored eyes
- Red or blonde hair

- A family history of skin cancer
- Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or tanning beds
- A weakened immune system
- Certain medical conditions, such as xeroderma pigmentosum

## **How are Non Melanoma Skin Cancer and Cutaneous Melanoma Diagnosed?**

NMSCs and CMs are diagnosed through a physical examination of the skin. Your doctor may also perform a biopsy, which involves removing a small sample of skin tissue for examination under a microscope.

## **How are Non Melanoma Skin Cancer and Cutaneous Melanoma Treated?**

The treatment for NMSCs and CMs depends on the stage of the cancer and the patient's overall health. Treatment options may include:

- Surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Chemotherapy
- Immunotherapy
- Targeted therapy

## **How can I Prevent Non Melanoma Skin Cancer and Cutaneous Melanoma?**

There are several things you can do to reduce your risk of developing NMSCs and CMs, including:

- Seek shade during peak sun hours (10am-4pm)
- Wear protective clothing, such as long sleeves and pants
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat
- Apply sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher to all exposed skin
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or more often if you are swimming or sweating
- Avoid tanning beds
- Get regular skin exams from a dermatologist

NMSCs and CMs are serious skin cancers, but they are often curable if they are treated early. By following these prevention tips and getting regular skin exams, you can reduce your risk of developing these cancers.



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