Can you spot A rip at the beach? A great wave? A skin cancer?

Two in three Australians will develop skin cancer before the age of 70. The good news is that 99 per cent of skin cancers can be successfully treated if detected early.

Do you know what skin cancer looks like? A simple check could save your life. We should all check our skin regularly. Get to know your skin and take immediate action if you notice any changes.

If you have fair skin, blue or green eyes, fair- or red-haired lots of moles or freckles you are at high risk of developing skin cancer.

Cumulative UV exposure also contributes to your risk of developing skin cancer. So if you grew up in Australia, work outdoors or spend lots of time in the sun you should take care to protect and check your skin.

There are three main types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma.

Melanoma
• Accounts for 1-2% of skin cancers.
• Is the most dangerous and aggressive form of skin cancer.
• If left untreated can spread to other parts of the body and can be fatal.
• Grows quickly over weeks to months.
• Can appear as a new or existing spot, freckle or mole that changes in colour, size or shape.
• Can grow anywhere on the body, not just areas exposed to the sun.
• Occurs most frequently on the upper back in males and on the lower leg in females.

Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)
• Accounts for about 66% of skin cancers.
• Grows slowly over months or years.
• Look for small, round or flattened spots that are red, pale or pearly in colour. Some are scaly like a patch of eczema.
• May become ulcerated, bleed and fail to heal.
• Usually found on the upper body, head or neck.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)
• Accounts for about 33% of skin cancers.
• Grows over months and may spread if not treated.
• Look for scaly red areas that may bleed easily, ulcers or non-healing sores that are often painful, especially when touched.
• Often found on lips, ears, scalp, backs of the hands and lower legs.

Warning signs
The following spots are not skin cancer but may predispose you to skin cancer or be a warning sign that skin damage has occurred.

Dysplastic naevi (‘atypical moles’)• Usually 5-10mm wide with uneven colouring.
• If you have lots of odd-shaped moles get your skin checked regularly by your doctor.

Solar keratoses (‘sunspots’)• Generally hard, red, scaly spots on sun-exposed areas of the skin.
• Most commonly found on the head, neck and on the back of the hands.
• Be a warning sign that the skin has been damaged by the sun and that skin cancers may develop.
• If you have solar keratoses, protect yourself from further sun damage and have your skin checked regularly by a doctor.

Skin cancers
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Eye damage
The sun can also damage your eyes. In the short term, sun exposure can cause burns to the eye similar to sunburn of the skin. Long-term exposure can lead to cataracts (clouding of the lens), photokeratitis (inflammation covering the cornea) and cancer of the conjunctiva or cornea. It is important to protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses and a broad-brimmed or bucket hat.

1. Pterygium (tur-ridg-i-um)
2. Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the conjunctiva
3. Cataract

Be SunSmart. Protect yourself in five ways from skin cancer.
- Use clothing to cover as much skin as possible.
- Use a full-length or hand-held mirror to check your back, legs and scalp.
- SunSmart app at www.cancer.org.au/UVAlert
- Check our UV Alert online
- Check our UV Alert online

Slip on protective clothing
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Stop on SPF 30 or higher sunscreen
- Make sure it’s broad spectrum and water-resistant.
- Slap on a hat
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat that covers your face, head, neck and ears.
- Seek shade
- Make use of trees or built shade or bring your own.
- Slide on some sunglasses
- Close-fitting wrap-around styles offer the best protection.

For more information call Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 or visit www.cancer.org.au