Living with blood cancer

Sun safety



When you have blood cancer, your skin may be more vulnerable to sunburn, sun damage and skin cancer.

This can happen because:

- Your immune system may not work well. It may not be able to stop skin cancer cells from growing.
- Some blood cancers have genetic changes that are linked to a higher risk of skin cancer.
- Some treatments for blood cancer can also increase your risk of skin cancer.

It's important to protect your skin from the sun and to check for any skin changes.

How to protect your skin

Protecting your skin against the sun means more than just using sunscreen. Here are some steps you can take to lower your risk of sunburn and skin cancer.

These apply whether you have white skin, or black or brown skin. It's sensible to follow them all year round.



Stay in the shade. Particularly in the summer months when the sun is at its highest. And between 11am and 3pm when the sun is usually at its strongest.



Use high-factor sunscreens. Choose products with at least SPF 30 UVB protection and 4-star UVA protection.



Cover up. Wear clothes, a hat and sunglasses to protect your skin and eyes from the sun.



Avoid using tanning beds or sunlamps. They can damage your skin.



Consider taking a vitamin B3 supplement. This may reduce your risk of some skin cancers. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more advice.

Your skin makes vitamin D when it's exposed to the sun. If you're limiting your sun exposure, consider taking a vitamin D supplement, even in summer.

How to check for skin cancer

Try to check your skin for changes monthly. Consider arranging an annual skin check with your GP or practice nurse.

You can check for skin cancer by looking for new moles or marks that do not clear up. Or changes to a mole you already have. If you do this once a month, you'll get to know which moles and marks are normal for you and which ones are new or changing.

Look out for:

- Changes in colour, shape and behaviour of existing moles. This includes itching, crusting, bleeding or pain.
- New moles or marks that don't go away within 2 months. Or don't heal properly, like forming a scab that falls off and grows again.
- A dark mark under a nail that's not from an injury.

You may need to use a mirror or ask family or a friend to help you check places you can't see. You could take photos of any moles you have to make it easier to track any changes.

If you spot signs of skin cancer, make an appointment with your GP as soon as possible. Particularly if it's a mole or mark that is growing quickly or is painful. The earlier skin cancer is detected, the easier it is to treat.

Need support or information?

- Scan the QR code or visit **leukaemiacare.org.uk**
- Call our freephone helpline on **08088 010 444**
- Send a WhatsApp to **07500 068065**
- Email **support@leukaemiacare.org.uk**

This information is aimed at people in the UK. We do our best to make sure it is accurate and up to date but it should not replace advice or guidance from your health professional. If you have any feedback or you'd like a list of our sources, please email information@leukaemiacare.org.uk.

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Leukaemia Care

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