

Vitamin D and Melanoma

Information and advice for patients

Dermatology

This leaflet gives information and advice on Vitamin D after a melanoma diagnosis.

National Melanoma guidance recommends that all patients with a diagnosis of Melanoma should have their Vitamin D levels checked. The rationale for this is that if levels of Vitamin D are low at the time of diagnosis, it is likely that they will become even lower post diagnosis, as patients are advised to reduce sun exposure to reduce the risk of developing further skin cancers.

Studies have shown that if vitamin D levels are higher at a melanoma diagnosis, the tumour is more likely to be thinner, to be with a better chance of survival.

What is Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is a hormone the body produces from sufficient doses of sun exposure. The UV light from the sun is converted into vitamin D through the skin. Vitamin D is also found in other sources such as some foods and supplements.

Why do we need vitamin D

Vitamin D is important to help maintain our overall health and wellbeing. It helps the absorption of calcium in the body to maintain healthy bones, teeth and muscles.

How is Vitamin D checked and monitored?

You can also discuss any concerns with your GP.

Sun advice – TOP TIPS

- Avoid prolonged sun exposure, make sure you never burn.
- Apply sun cream of SPF 30 or 50 if possible with 4/5 star UV protection at least 20 minutes prior to going out.
- Seek shade or avoid the sun between the hours of 11am-3pm when UV index is at its highest.
- Reapply sun screen regularly covering up with suitable clothing and a hat.

Find out more about sun safety on the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/sunscreen-and-sun-safety

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Foods that contain vitamin D

- Oily fish such as salmon, sardines, pilchards and kippers.
- Egg yolk, meat offal and milk contain small amounts.
- Some breakfast cereals have added vitamin D.
- Cod liver oils (not to take if pregnant).
- Some yoghurts have added vitamin D.

Further reading on diet and vitamin D can be found by visiting the website of the Association of UK dietitians: www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html

Cancer research UK state, "there are around 16,000 new melanoma skin cancers in the UK every year, and survival has doubled in the UK."

Contact details

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Further support and information

The Courtyard Centre

Cancer Information & Support Centre

Sandwell General Hospital

Lyndon

West Bromwich

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0121 507 3792

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Dermatology

British Dietetic Association

Telephone: 0121 200 8080

Website: <https://www.bda.uk.com/>

Macmillan Cancer Support

Telephone: 0808 808 00 00

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/>

(All websites accessed and checked 10 March 2023).

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Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Cancer Research UK (No date). *Melanoma skin cancer statistics*. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/melanoma-skin-cancer> (Accessed: 10 March 2023).
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- Newton-Bishop, J. A., Beswick, S., et al. (2009). Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D3 levels are associated with breslow thickness at presentation and survival from melanoma. *Journal of clinical oncology*, 27(32), 5439. doi: 10.1200/JCO.2009.22.1135

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