

Skin Cancer Treatment

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in Australia. Skin cancer treatment requires the removal of the affected skin. This procedure is usually performed under local anesthetic. In most cases, stitches are used to close the wound, leaving a straight-line scar. However, for certain areas of the body or larger cancers, a skin graft may be necessary.

Unfortunately, once you have been diagnosed with skin cancer, you are at a higher risk for developing further cancers. Therefore, it is important that you have frequent check-ups to ensure that the cancer does not come back.

Types of Skin Cancer

Basal cell carcinoma accounts for more than 90% of all skin cancers. It is a slow-growing cancer that seldom spreads to other parts of the body and typically develops on the face, ears, neck, scalp, shoulders, or back. They are visible on the outer layer of skin in the form of a reddish patch, shiny bump, open sore, pink growth, or scar-like mark, a one-time treatment to surgically remove the infected area is all that is necessary.

Squamous cell carcinoma can be more aggressive than basal cell carcinoma and is also more likely to grow deep below the skin and spread to distant parts of the body and may result from excessive exposure to the sun or to certain chemicals. This typically occurs if the cancer is larger or has been growing, untreated, for a long period of time. Treatment involves surgery to remove the cancer and close monitoring of the lymph glands in the area.

Actinic keratosis, or solar keratosis, is a precancerous condition that has the potential for developing into squamous cell carcinoma. It appears as rough red or brown, scaly patches on the skin. They are often more easily felt than seen. Like skin cancer, actinic keratosis is usually found on sun-exposed areas of the body, but it can be found on other parts of the body as well.

Another type of cancer that occurs in the skin is melanoma, which begins in the cells that produce pigment in the skin. Melanoma is the most aggressive form of skin cancer, If not detected early, melanoma may spread to the surrounding lymph glands or other organs. To treat melanoma, the affected skin needs to be surgically removed, along with a rim of normal skin surrounding the infected area. Even if the tests bring up no results, the patient should be monitored for the next few years to confirm that the cancer has not come back or spread.

Removal of Non-Cancerous Spots

Most spots or blemishes are not skin cancer. Remember that after removal of a spot, a small scar will remain in its place, but this is usually less noticeable than the original spot. Some thin spots can be removed with IPL or a laser, which can leave virtually no scarring.

Blemishes that are the result of burst vessels or thin veins in the skin can also be treated with a special vascular laser. This laser targets only the blood vessels and leaves the skin untouched, meaning that there is no scarring. We provide this service through our in house Laser centre. The procedure is performed without need for anesthetic or hospitalization, and there is no time away from activities. The Sciton laser machine is an extremely accurate ablative laser, that produces very little collateral tissue injury, hence minimizing complications such as scarring and hyper or hypo-pigmentation.

Depending on the type of skin cancer, we offer topical treatments (creams), photodynamic (cream followed by intense red light), laser therapy and surgery. We also have treatments for other sun-induced skin problems, such as sun spots, increased pigmentation, prominent capillaries and wrinkles.

Photodynamic Therapy(A new treatment modality)

The treatment of skin cancer and pre-malignant skin lesions has traditionally relied on surgical excision. This remains the mainstay of treatment. The benefits are that the lesion is completely excised and there is histological confirmation of that fact.

The benefits of a non-surgical solution are obvious, avoiding surgery, scarring and possible disfigurement. However one must always remember that when you are dealing with a malignancy these goals must always be secondary to the primary aim of cure.

Photodynamic therapy has a number of advantages in the treatment of skin cancer and pre-malignant skin lesions. Photodynamic therapy is only appropriate for selected skin cancer and pre-malignant skin lesions. Dr. Gahankari will advise you whether Photodynamic therapy (or any other non-surgical option) is the right choice for you.