

## **MELANOMA MARCH**

This month is Melanoma March, which serves as a timely reminder about skin checks. The incidence rate of melanoma has almost doubled between 1982 and 2016, increasing from 27 to 49 cases for every 100,000 people.

Fortunately, approximately 80% of melanomas are diagnosed at an early stage. Improvements in detection and treatment are needed to reduce the deaths associated with advanced melanoma.

Dr Victoria Mar, dermatologist with the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) says: “The earlier that skin cancer is diagnosed and treated, the greater the chance of survival.”

It is important to be familiar with your skin. Perform self-examinations of your whole body, including scalp, hands and feet, with a hand mirror in front of a bathroom wall mirror. Look for changes in:

- New moles and spots
- Existing moles which increase in size, change colour or become irregular
- Any mole or spot that becomes raised, lumpy, scaly or ulcerated
- Red moles that are firm and enlarging
- Any mole or spot that itches, bleeds or weeps
- Any spot that looks different from the others.

Jimmy Niggles of Beard Season, a charity that aims to raise awareness of early detection, says: “We'd love for all Australians to have a skin check at least once a year. Ideally in winter, a time which not only provides the ideal growing conditions for beards, but the best time for a General Practitioner (GP) or dermatologist to find and treat suspect looking spots. As well as this, we'd love for people to learn the danger signs of melanoma, so they can keep an eye on themselves, their partners and friends all year round.”

Under Medicare, GPs can take biopsies – removal of a small piece of tissue – to confirm a diagnosis of skin cancer, perform minor excisions and discuss treatment options.

Dr Mar says: “GPs remain at the front line of skin cancer detection for most Australians. If your GP is concerned, particularly if you are at high risk of skin cancer, or have a suspicious mole or spot which may require more complex care, they may refer you to a dermatologist. Dermatologists have expertise in early detection and are trained to recognise changes in the skin that may indicate cancer.”

**ENDS**

### **References**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Australian Cancer Incidence and Mortality (ACIM) books: melanoma skin cancer. Canberra: AIHW. Accessed January 2017.

### **Links to further information**

[ACD skin cancer in Australia position statement](#)

[Beard Season](#)



[A-Z of Skin](#)

[Find a local dermatologist](#)

For further information on the ACD, visit [www.dermcoll.edu.au](http://www.dermcoll.edu.au), or see our updates on [Facebook](#) Twitter at [@DermatologyACD](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

**About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):**

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the speciality of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

**Media enquiries:**

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