

Melanoma Let's get under the skin of it

To support conversations between people with melanoma and their doctors, we developed 'Melanoma: Let's get under the skin of it' campaign in partnership with Melanoma UK.

This campaign aims to give people diagnosed with melanoma the confidence and support they need to speak to their doctor about their skin cancer, ask questions, and understand more about their personal diagnosis, to ensure they receive the right treatment for them.

It was created to encourage people with melanoma to find out more about melanoma, gene mutations, and their BRAF status and provides both patients and healthcare professionals with further information.

Below you'll find helpful information that will support people with melanoma on their treatment journey and their conversations with their healthcare professional.

Jump to:

[Understanding melanoma](#)

[Gene mutations](#)

[Living with melanoma](#)

[Treatments](#)

Understanding Melanoma

Understanding your melanoma diagnosis is the first step toward finding the right treatment. This section features useful information and downloadable resources to help you build a better understanding of your melanoma type and treatment.



[2]

Understanding Melanoma guide

We've created [this helpful guide](#) [2] to help you gain a better understanding of melanoma skin cancer. It features key facts, information about melanoma stages, appropriate treatment options, a handy glossary of terms and much more. We recommend [downloading](#) [2] and reading it to learn more.

What is melanoma?



Melanoma is a type of skin cancer which develops when DNA in pigment cells (melanocytes) becomes damaged, triggering genetic changes that cause the cells to abnormally multiply and form tumours.¹ Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer and the fifth most common cancer in the UK, with over 40 cases diagnosed every day.²

The incidence of melanoma has risen dramatically over recent years, especially in younger people.^{2,3} In fact, melanoma is one of the most common cancers in people aged 15-34 in the UK.² However, if detected early melanoma is almost always treatable.



A person's risk of developing cancer depends on many factors, including age, genetics and exposure to risk factors (including some potentially avoidable lifestyle factors).^{2,4}

Find out more about melanoma in the [Understanding Melanoma](#) ^[2] guide we developed in partnership with Melanoma UK.



How to identify if you have a melanoma?

About half of all melanomas start with a change in previously normal-looking skin. This usually looks like a dark area or an abnormal new mole. Other melanomas develop from a mole or freckle that you may already have.⁵

The different stages of melanoma

There are several different stages of melanoma which range from stage 0 to stage 4. The stage of a cancer is a term used to describe its size and depth of the melanoma, and whether it has spread. Knowing the stage of a melanoma helps doctors choose the right treatment option.⁶

You can learn more about each melanoma stage in the table below.

Melanoma stage

Description

Stage 0 (otherwise known as 'in-situ')

Cancer cells located in the top layer of skin. Melanoma cells are contained in the area in which they started to develop and have not grown into deeper layers of the skin.⁶

Stage 1

Melanoma is only in the skin and there is no sign that it has spread to lymph nodes or other parts of the body.⁷

Stage 2

Melanoma is only in the skin and there is no sign that it has spread to lymph nodes or other parts of the body. It may be between 1 and 4 mm thick and may have ulcerated.⁸

Stage 3

Melanoma that has spread to the lymphatic vessels or lymph nodes closest to the melanoma but not anywhere else in the body.⁹

Stage 4 (otherwise known as 'metastatic' or 'advanced')

Melanoma that has spread to other organs such as the lungs, liver, bones or brain.¹⁰

What is melanoma?

Melanoma is a cancer that usually starts in the skin, either in a mole or in normal-looking skin.⁹ It occurs when melanocytes (pigment-producing skin cells) **grow and multiply in an uncontrolled way.**¹⁰



Gene mutations in melanoma

This content has been developed for people who have recently been diagnosed with melanoma. It features crucial information about melanoma gene mutations to aid in informing treatment options.



[3]

Understanding the BRAF mutation

This guide [3] focusses on BRAF gene mutations in people with melanoma. It describes in detail what a BRAF gene mutation is and who should be tested, with facts about melanoma and therapy options. This content is free to download [3] for your learning and reference.

Find out more about gene mutations

A number of tests are used to diagnose melanoma and provide information to identify suitable treatment options.



If melanoma has spread under the surrounding skin, to lymph nodes, or to other parts of the body, a biopsy sample will be tested to see if particular gene mutations have occurred. Mutations are small changes to the DNA of the cells, some of which can cause the melanoma to grow.⁶

The three most common gene mutations in melanoma are BRAF, NRAS and c-KIT. Of these, the BRAF mutation is most common: around 40-50% of melanoma patients have it.¹¹ This mutation causes an overactive BRAF protein to be produced, and this in turn causes cancer cells to grow and spread out of control.¹¹

Find out more about gene mutations, such as BRAF, in the Understanding the BRAF mutation guide [3] we developed in partnership with Melanoma UK.

Find out more about tests and gene mutations by watching our melanoma testing video.



Is all melanoma the same?

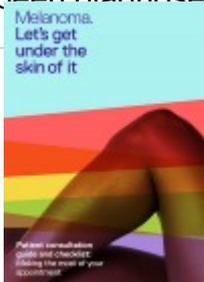
Multiple gene mutations can play a role in the progression of melanoma.

The three most common gene mutations involved in melanoma are **BRAF, NRAS and c-KIT.**¹¹

The **BRAF** mutation is most common: **approximately 50%** of melanoma patients have it.¹² It causes an overactive BRAF protein to be produced, which causes tumour cells growth and spread out of cancer cells.¹³

Living with melanoma

The following resources and information have been created to help people who have recently been diagnosed to adapt to living with melanoma.



[4]

Patient Consultation Guide and Checklist

This [consultation guide and checklist](#) [4] has been designed so you can get the most out of appointments with your healthcare professional. It provides advice on how to share the right information with your doctor, so you receive a treatment option that fits in with your lifestyle, as well as things to consider before, during and after your appointment. We recommend [downloading](#) [4] and printing this guide and bringing it along to your appointments.

Find out more about living with melanoma

Supporting people living with melanoma

At Novartis, we're committed to developing medicines to effectively treat stage 3 and 4 melanoma. We work together with patient advocacy groups to ensure patients are informed and kept up to date with the latest melanoma treatment and disease information.



Some of our work includes supporting patients by developing information leaflets, videos, animations and educational support to help them understand melanoma. We collaborate with patient advocacy groups to identify attitudes and opinions of patients and carers in relation to treatments and care.

Living with melanoma

Find out how two patients, Tina and Debbie, manage their treatments and find out about their personal experiences of living with melanoma.

The patient films were made by Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd, in association with Melanoma UK.

Melanoma treatments

There are many treatments available for Melanoma patients. This section aims to help patients understand the options so they can make a more informed decision and have more effective conversations with their healthcare professional.

Discover the melanoma treatments available



Over recent years there have been many advances in treatments for skin cancer. Today, 90% of patients diagnosed with melanoma will live for 10 years or more, compared to only 50% of those diagnosed in the 1970s.²

Depending on the stage of melanoma, there are now a range of treatment options available, meaning people have more flexibility when it comes to finding the right treatment option to suit their lifestyle.

Learn more about the different types of treatment available for melanoma in this video.

The melanoma treatment journey



Hear from two patients, Lisa and Tony, talking about their treatment journey whilst living with melanoma.

The patient films were made by Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd, in association with Melanoma UK.

Work with healthcare professionals



As well as furthering scientific research, we work together with the medical community. Some of our work includes:

- Working to improve the understanding of the medical community and keeping them up to date with disease area and treatment knowledge
- Working in partnership to further scientific knowledge, with organisations such as Melanoma Focus and NHS trusts
- Partnering with the NHS to help improve melanoma services to patients

References

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Melanoma

Source URL: <https://www.novartis.co.uk/melanoma>

Links

- [1] <https://www.novartis.co.uk/melanoma>
- [2] https://www.novartis.co.uk/sites/www.novartis.co.uk/files/Understanding_Melanoma_Guide_FINAL.pdf
- [3] https://www.novartis.co.uk/sites/www.novartis.co.uk/files/Understanding_the_BRAF_mutation_FINAL_0.pdf
- [4] https://www.novartis.co.uk/sites/www.novartis.co.uk/files/Patient_Consultation_Guide_FINAL.pdf
- [5] <http://www.bad.org.uk/shared/get-file.ashx?id=104&itemtype=document>
- [6] <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/skin-cancer#heading-Zero>
- [7] <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng14/chapter/Introduction>
- [8] <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/melanoma-skin-cancer/risk-factors#heading-Zero>

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- [10] <http://www.bad.org.uk/library-media/documents/Melanoma%20-%20Diagnosis%20and%20Staging.pdf>
- [11] <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/melanoma/stages-types/stage-1>
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- [15] <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/melanoma/getting-diagnosed/tests-stage/genetic-tests-your-melanoma-cells>