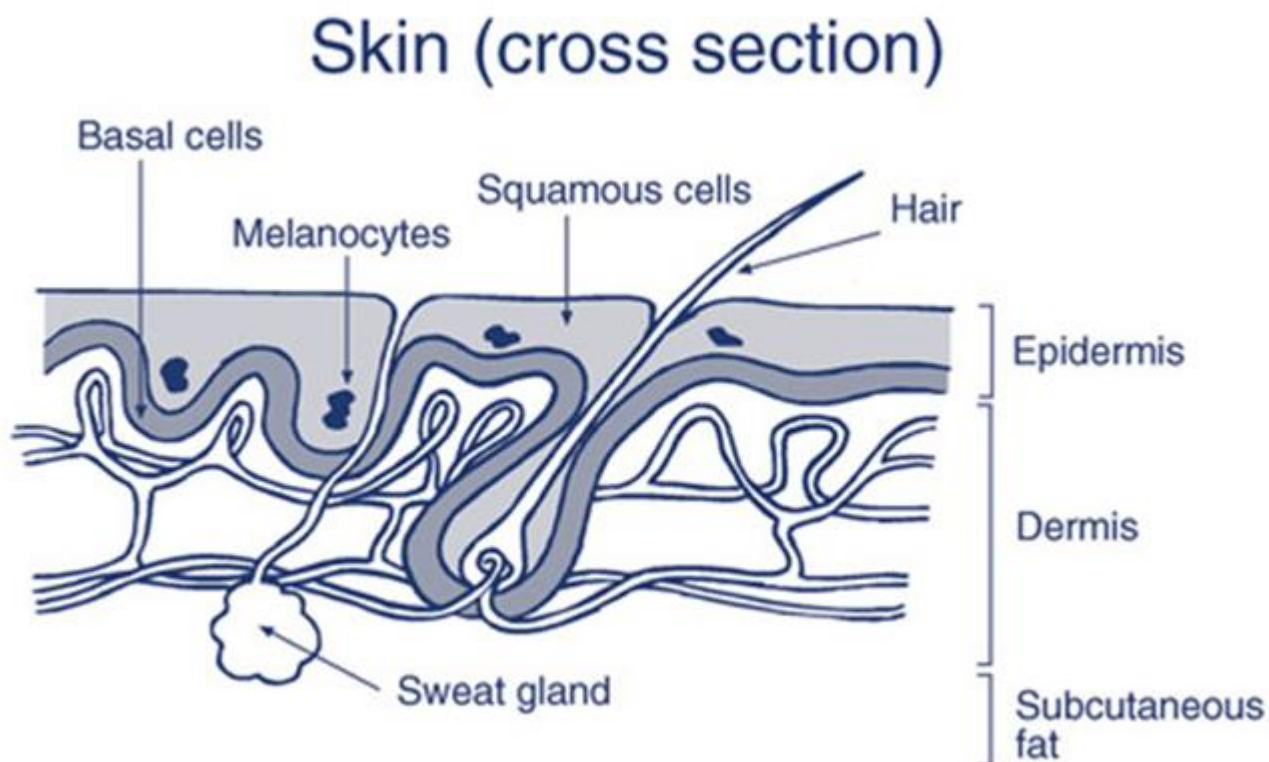


Skin cancer types

There are three main [types of skin cancer](#) . The most serious is melanoma.

Like all body tissues our skin is made up of cells: basal cells, squamous cells and melanocytes.



The different types of skin cancer are named for the skin cell where the cancer develops: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. Carcinoma is another word for cancer. Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas are often grouped together and called 'common' skin cancers.

What does skin cancer look like?

Skin cancer generally **stands out as being different** to surrounding skin. If a spot strikes you as being a bit odd, take it seriously – it is worth [getting it checked out](#) .

Skin cancer mostly appears as a new and unusual looking spot. It may also appear as an existing spot that has changed in colour, size or shape.

Here are some different types of skin cancers (some images kindly provided by the Skin & Cancer Foundation Victoria).

Melanoma



Melanoma can grow quickly. It can become life-threatening in as little as six weeks and if untreated, it can spread to other parts of the body. It can appear on skin not normally exposed to the sun.

It is usually flat with an uneven smudgy outline, may be blotchy and more than one colour – brown, black, blue, red or grey.

Use the ABCD rule to look for melanoma where:

- A= asymmetry, look for spots that are asymmetrical not round
- B= border, look for spots with uneven borders
- C= colour, look for spots with an unusual or uneven colour
- D= diameter, look for spots that are larger than 7 mm

Nodular melanoma



A highly dangerous form of melanoma that looks different from common melanomas – they are raised from the start and have an even colouring (often red or pink and some are brown or black). This type of melanoma grows very quickly and needs to be treated as soon as possible.

Basal cell carcinoma



This is the most common but least dangerous form of skin cancer. It grows slowly, usually on the head, neck and upper torso. It may appear as a lump or dry, scaly area. It can be red, pale or pearly in colour. As it grows, it may ulcerate or appear like a sore that does not heal properly.

Squamous cell carcinoma



This type of skin cancer is not as dangerous as melanoma but may spread to other parts of the body if not treated. It grows over some months and appears on skin most often exposed to the sun. It can be a thickened, red, scaly spot that may bleed easily, crust or ulcerate.

Warning signs of sun damaged skin and skin cancer risk



Spots, blemishes, freckles and moles, similar to those pictured above, are signs of sun-damaged skin. They are usually harmless, but **if you notice them changing, see a doctor.**