



# **Skin Cancer Awareness Month**

**January 2023**



**PAN-AFRICAN**

MANAGED CARE

# Skin Cancer Awareness Month

## What is skin cancer?

The skin is the largest organ of the body that protects the body from germs and regulates body temperature. Just like any other organ, it may develop some medical issues such as skin cancer. Skin cancer is the abnormal growth of skin cells and is developed on skin that is exposed to the sun. As reported by the Western Cape Government, Tygerberg Hospital treats approximately 1 000 skin cancer patients per year and is appealing to the public to be vigilant regarding sun protection during the warm, sunny summer weather. There have been 20 000 reported cases of Skin Cancer and 700 deaths every year. Skin Cancer Awareness Month promotes the importance of looking after the health of your skin and educates on the impact of UV rays on the skin.



## How is skin cancer caused?

Skin cancer is caused by overexposure to sunlight or the ultraviolet rays from the sun, tanning beds, or sunlamps. Generally, UV rays can damage skin cells which can result in sunburn. As the skin becomes damaged, this causes changes in the skin texture, premature skin aging, and skin cancer. Skin cancers may also be hereditary where 5% to 10% are hereditary. Certain medications, like some antibiotics and blood pressure pills, may make your skin even more sensitive to sunlight. These patients often burn when in the sun. Patients with experience with skin cancer, are advised to go for regular check-ups.

## How do we prevent skin cancer?

- Use of sunscreen: SPF 15 or higher sunscreen may reduce the risk of developing skin cancer.
- Sun protective clothing: People who enjoy daily activities in the sun, such as running for exercise purposes may be at risk for skin cancer. Protective clothing that is rated UPF 50 or higher will protect against the sun's UV rays.
- Avoid tanning: If the skin darkens, it is an indication that the skin cells are being damaged.
- Get a full body skin exam by a dermatologist: Samples are taken from concerning areas.



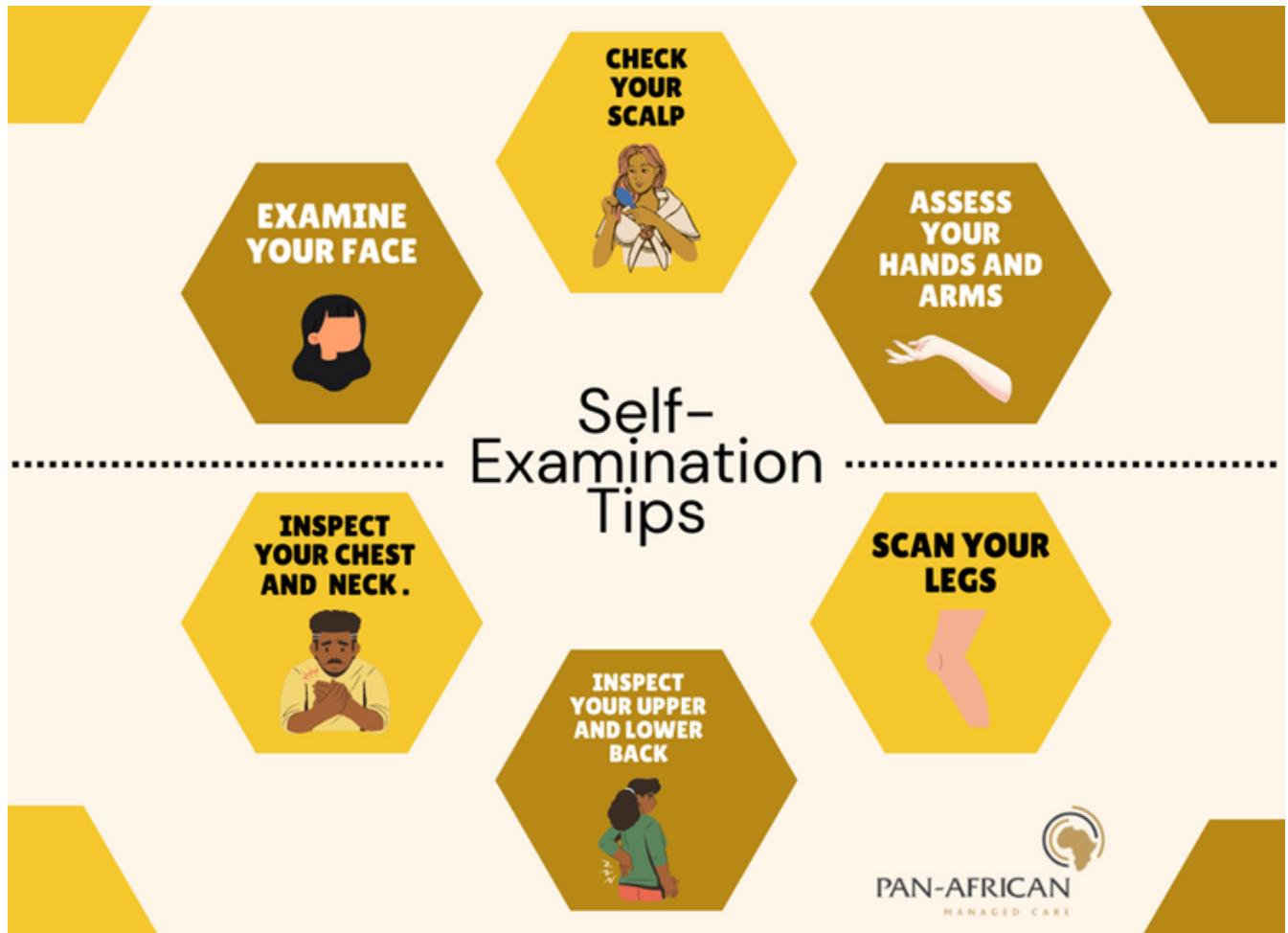
## Early detections

Early detections are important because they can save lives. Self-examination is the most powerful way to detect skin cancer. It is recommended that you self-examine your skin from head-to-toe, once a month.

This is what skin cancer may look like:

- A bump on the skin that seems like it is expanding.
- A sore that bleeds and does not heal after several weeks.
- A mole that changes shape/with an odd shape and size can indicate skin cancer.
- Wart-like growth.
- A rough or scaly red patch, that might crust or bleed.
- A mole that itches or bleeds all the time should also be attended to.

## Instructions on how to perform a self-exam:



Skin cancer was reported to be the most common cancer. With South Africa's harsh climate, skin cancer may be on the rise due to exposure of high ultraviolet levels. Some cancer organisations have suggested that one should avoid direct sunlight between 10h00 and 16h00, as the sun's rays are more dangerous during that time of the day.

### References

- Western Cape Government: <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/be-sun-smart-look-after-your-skin>
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- Centers for Disease control and Prevention: [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic\\_info/what-is-skin-cancer.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/what-is-skin-cancer.htm)
- Skin Cancer Foundation: <https://www.skincancer.org/early-detection/self-exams/>
- Link Pharmacy - <https://www.linkpharmacy.co.za/sunsmart-skin-cancer-awareness-month/>
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- <https://www.nike.com/za/a/choose-sun-protective-clothing>