

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [646-926-0945](tel:646-926-0945) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center

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MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING

There is no solid scientific evidence about whether screening prevents people from dying from skin cancer. The best way to research skin cancer screening is through randomized controlled studies, also known as clinical trials. However, there have been no clinical trials to test if screening for skin cancer is helpful. Without this research, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) lacks scientific evidence about screenings. In 2016, the USPSTF decided not to recommend skin cancer screenings.

## What is My Risk for Skin Cancer?

A risk factor is anything that increases your chance of getting a disease, such as cancer. Important risk factors for skin cancer are sun exposure and your age. Your risk is higher as you get older.

There are 4 types of skin cancer. Here are the risk factors for each one:

- Basal cell carcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma
- Melanoma
- Merkel cell carcinoma

[Learn more](#) about the different skin cancers and risk factors.

## Higher Risk for Skin Cancer

If you're at higher risk, regular skin cancer screenings may help.

During your care, your healthcare provider may recommend you get checked by a dermatologist (skin doctor). We recommend you talk about getting a skin cancer risk assessment if you have:

- A family history of melanoma in 2 or more relatives related to you by blood.
- Many moles or atypical (dysplastic) moles. Moles are benign (not cancer). Atypical moles can have irregular borders, be different colors, or be asymmetrical (they don't look the same on all sides).
- Many actinic keratoses spots. These precancerous lesions are grey or pink scaly patches of skin in areas often exposed to the sun.
- A personal history of many basal cell or squamous cell skin cancers.

[Learn more](#) about MSK's screening and surveillance tests for people at higher risk for melanoma.

## Should I Check My Skin for Skin Cancer?

MSK recommends you check your own skin regularly, every month. This is called a skin self-exam. You can check for skin spots or moles that are new or changing. This can help you find problems before they become cancer, or find cancer early, when it's easier to treat.

You can find most skin cancers at an early stage if you:

- Learn about the signs of skin cancer and risk factors for the disease.
- Get to know how your skin looks and feels. Getting familiar with your skin can help you notice changes.
- Visit your healthcare provider if you see something on your skin that does not look right. Talk with them about any unusual spots, moles, or changes in your skin.

To learn about skin self-exams, see [How to Do a Monthly Skin Exam to Check for Melanoma](#) .

### Request an Appointment

Call [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225)

We're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

[Make an appointment](#)

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