

Ignore Changing Moles and Other Blemishes at Your Peril!

The long sunshine hours enjoyed in Northland are among its many attractions. However, for those of us who enjoy the outdoors the sun is also a real hazard. At particular risk are fishermen, golfers and other outdoor sports enthusiasts.

The cumulative effects of sun exposure can result in premature aging of the skin and other irreversible skin damage. Premature aging of the skin commonly presents as wrinkles, age spots and leathery skin. Other skin damage may be noticed as a mole or lesion which changes, itches or bleeds, or it may simply appear as some scaly skin or a small raised swelling that refuses to go away.

The sun's UV rays consist of two main types: UVA or UVB. Skin protection against both types is vital.

UVB rays cause sunburn and are more powerful in the summer months.

UVA rays are responsible for premature aging and other skin damage. They reach deeper layers of the skin, they are not dependant on the time of day, and they are able to penetrate clouds and glass windows. So skin protection on cloudy days and during winter months is also important.

There are many treatments available for skin cancer including freezing and ointments. Minor surgery is usually required to remove deeper lesions. Your family doctor can provide much of this care. However, often an expert opinion is required. Mr Murray Beagley is a fully trained Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon, now visiting Warkworth, who offers comprehensive treatment of all aspects of skin cancer from the smallest lesion to the reconstruction of large defects created after removal of neglected or aggressive tumours.

Remember:

- Sun protection is the best way to prevent premature aging and skin cancer. Always wear a wide brimmed hat and long sleeves when out in the sun. Apply a recommended sunblock to all exposed skin - and reapply every 2 hours!
- Early intervention is the key to straight forward treatment of skin cancers!