



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**09:30, 30 March 2023**

### **Official statistics show an increase in non-melanoma skin cancer cases in Wales**

The first release of official statistics on non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) - the most common form of cancer in Wales - has shown a seven per cent increase in cases over a four year period.

The age-standardised incidence of NMSC has increased by 7.1 per cent between 2016 and 2019 – and the rate is the highest of all the UK nations.

NMSC is the group of cancers that has by far the highest number of cases in Wales.

NMSC made up 43 per cent of all new cases of cancer in Wales in 2019, with 15,102 first occurrences, compared to a total of 20,058 cases of all other types of cancer combined.

In fact, after adjusting for differences in age, the incidence rate is two-and-a-half times higher than prostate cancer, which has the next highest rate.

The main factor that causes NMSC is long term exposure to the sun, and the highest proportion of cases are in those over 65. It usually develops in areas of the body that are most exposed to the sun, such as the head, face, scalp and neck.

Unlike many other cancers, there's less risk that NMSCs will spread to other parts of the body, although this can still happen. This means that if they are diagnosed early, most cases can be treated successfully.

Professor Dyfed Wyn Huws, Director of the Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit (WCISU) at Public Health Wales, said: "These new figures show us just how common non-melanoma skin cancer is in Wales.

"NMSC is somewhat unusual in that it has a different profile to many other cancers – for example, it is more common in people who live in more affluent

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areas, with the incidence in people living in the least deprived fifth of areas in Wales being 26 per cent higher than people living in the most deprived fifth.

“It is a concern to see the increase in numbers of NMSC and more work is needed to identify exactly why this is happening, especially in Wales.

“There are a few simple steps that we can all take to reduce the risk of skin cancer. While time spent outdoors is good for us, too much time exposed to the sun increases our risk.

“We recommend staying out of the sun during the hottest part of the day and keep babies out of direct sunlight at all times.

“Wear a hat, clothing that covers up your arms and legs, and sunglasses if you’re outdoors from mid-morning to mid-afternoon (even if it’s overcast in summer) and use a high factor sunscreen of at least SPF30, especially if you have paler skin. In addition, people with certain health conditions such as previous skin cancer, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease, and HIV, should take extra care, as the evidence suggests that they have a greater risk of NMSC.”

“It’s best to avoid sunbeds to get a tan, if possible.

“You should see your GP if you have marks on your skin which grow, bleed, change in appearance in any way or never heal completely or form a scab that falls off and then grows again. Any existing moles that change in size, shape, colour or texture also need to be seen by your GP.”

The report can be viewed [here](#).

## END

**CONTACT: For media enquiries please contact the Public Health Wales Communications team on 0300 003 0277 (24 hours)**

### Editor’s notes

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