



On average, people living with mental health conditions **die 11 years earlier than the rest of the population.**

Two-thirds of these deaths are **preventable**¹ by accessing freely available services.

We can change this!

The health inequity

In Australia, people with mental health conditions are **3 times more likely to die prematurely** from skin cancer.¹

For people with mental health conditions, skin cancer causes:

- almost 400 premature deaths^a per year¹
- and over 240 (5 per week) of these deaths are potentially preventable.¹



Skin cancer screening saves lives^b

With early detection, 5-year survival rates for skin cancers such as melanoma are around 94%.³

Most GPs can perform a skin check and refer to a specialist. Many skin cancer clinics also bulk bill for standard screening, especially for healthcare card holders.

Risk factors for skin cancer include sun exposure and a history of sunburn. People with many or atypical moles, a personal or family history of melanoma, or features such as fair skin, red hair, blue eyes, and older age are at higher risk.

You can check your risk using [QIMR Berghofer's melanoma risk calculator](#).

Prevention is key: Minimise exposure to the sun using these common methods:



SLIP



SLOP



SLAP



SEEK



SLIDE



Access to quality physical health care is a basic human right!

Keep asking until you and the people you support get the care they deserve.

This factsheet is part of a series on specific health risks for people living with mental health conditions. It draws on Equally Well's national monitoring report, *Unequally Unwell*, and other relevant research.

Every day in Australia, **46 people** with mental health conditions **die of preventable** physical health conditions.¹

We can all help to improve health and save lives of people living with mental health conditions



Looking after yourself

- **Check your skin** for moles or blemishes to learn what is normal for you.
- **Report** changes to your doctor. Early detection significantly improves outcomes.
- **Ask** your GP about screening options if you believe you may be at risk.³
- **Check your risk** using the evidence-based [melanoma risk calculator](#).⁶
- **Equip** yourself with the [Taking Charge of your Care resource](#) to plan the physical health care you want.



Helping others

- **Ask** friends or family about their health, and when they last saw their GP.
- **Advise** about skin cancer screening options available.
- **Assist** by supporting them to arrange and attend GP appointments.
- **Share** this fact sheet in places such as your workplace, health services, libraries, community spaces and with friends and colleagues.



Workplace & network

- **Promote** staff awareness about the barriers to skin cancer screening for people with mental health conditions.
- **Encourage** proactive screening for adults over 18 years old.
- **Equip** your service with resources available from the [Melanoma Institute Australia](#).⁷
- **Seek** to coordinate mental and general healthcare.

Further information

The Unequally Unwell report¹ examined the premature mortality and preventable deaths for people living with mental health conditions, defined as the number of deaths in a section of the population above that expected based on the total population death rates (as defined by OECD⁸).

About skin cancer

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in Australia, and while it can be life-threatening, early treatment is highly effective. Most skin cancers are caused by exposure to UV radiation from the sun, so limiting excess sun exposure is key to prevention. Skin checks by your GP or a skin clinic can help with early detection.

More information is available from [Cancer Australia](#) or [Melanoma Institute Australia](#).

About Equally Well

Equally Well is a collective of over 100 organisations committed to the physical health of people living with mental health conditions. The Equally Well initiative is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Links *[click or scan]*



[Unequally Unwell
Summary Report](#)



[Full Report](#)



[Equally Well](#)

^a Premature is defined as between the age of 15 to 74 years.

^b Please note, this information is not a substitute for professional medical advice.



Factsheet #9

Skin cancer and mental health

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