

NICaN Skin Suspected Cancer Pathway (September 2026)

Melanoma

RED-FLAG referral for patients with:

- A suspicious pigmented skin lesion (excision in primary care should be avoided), with a score of 3 or more, using the **weighted 7-point checklist** list below:

Minor features of lesions (scoring 1 point each)

- largest diameter 7 mm or more
- inflammation
- oozing
- change in sensation

Main features of lesions (scoring 2 points each)

- change in size
- irregular shape
- irregular colour

- A lesion where dermoscopy suggests melanoma of the skin.
- A pigmented or non-pigmented nodular lesion suspicious of nodular melanoma.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma

RED-FLAG referral for patients:

- With a non-healing keratinizing tumour with significant induration on palpation, around or larger than 1cm and/or with a documented expansion over 8 weeks (commonly found on the face, scalp or back of the hand).
- Who have undergone an organ transplant and develop new or enlarging skin lesions, particularly those that appear atypical or aggressive, as squamous cell carcinoma is common in individuals with immunosuppression.
- With histological diagnosis of a squamous cell carcinoma.

Basal Cell Carcinoma

URGENT referral for patients if skin lesion is suspicious of a basal cell carcinoma.

Basal cell carcinomas have one or more features including:

- Ulcer with a raised rolled edge, a nodule on the skin (waxy or pearly), a reddish plaque, scar-like with tethering or contraction.
- Prominent fine blood vessels within the lesion.
- History of regular bleeding.
- May contain pigmented areas.
- Rarely painful.

RED-FLAG referral for patients:

- With a lesion in high-risk areas (eyelid, lip margin or nasolabial groove and external auditory canal/meatus), and where a delay may have a significant impact.
- **Diagnosis in doubt** - possible SCC or baso-squamous lesion.

Refer via the Dermatology Photo Triage pathway (where possible)

1. Suspect cancer recognition and referral NICE guidelines NG12 (April 2025) [Scenario: Referral for suspected skin cancer | Management | Skin cancers - recognition and referral | CKS | NICE](#)
2. Improving outcomes for people with skin tumours including melanoma (update). The management of low-risk basal cell carcinomas in the community 2010. [CSG8 Improving outcomes for people with skin tumours including melanoma](#)
3. BMJ Learning Common skin tumours: a guide to diagnosis [Recognising skin cancer and benign skin lesions Online course | BMJ Learning](#)

To access the specification for the photo triage enhanced service and up to date information regarding this please see: <https://primarycare.hscni.net/?s=photo+triage>