

Lifestyle / Mind and Body

# Did You Know That You Can Get Skin Cancer On Your Eyelid?

Eyelid cancer is very rare—but it can happen to you. Here, derms share what you need to know to protect yourself.

By Rachel Sokol | Aug 08, 2018

Topics: [skin cancer](#), [skin care](#)

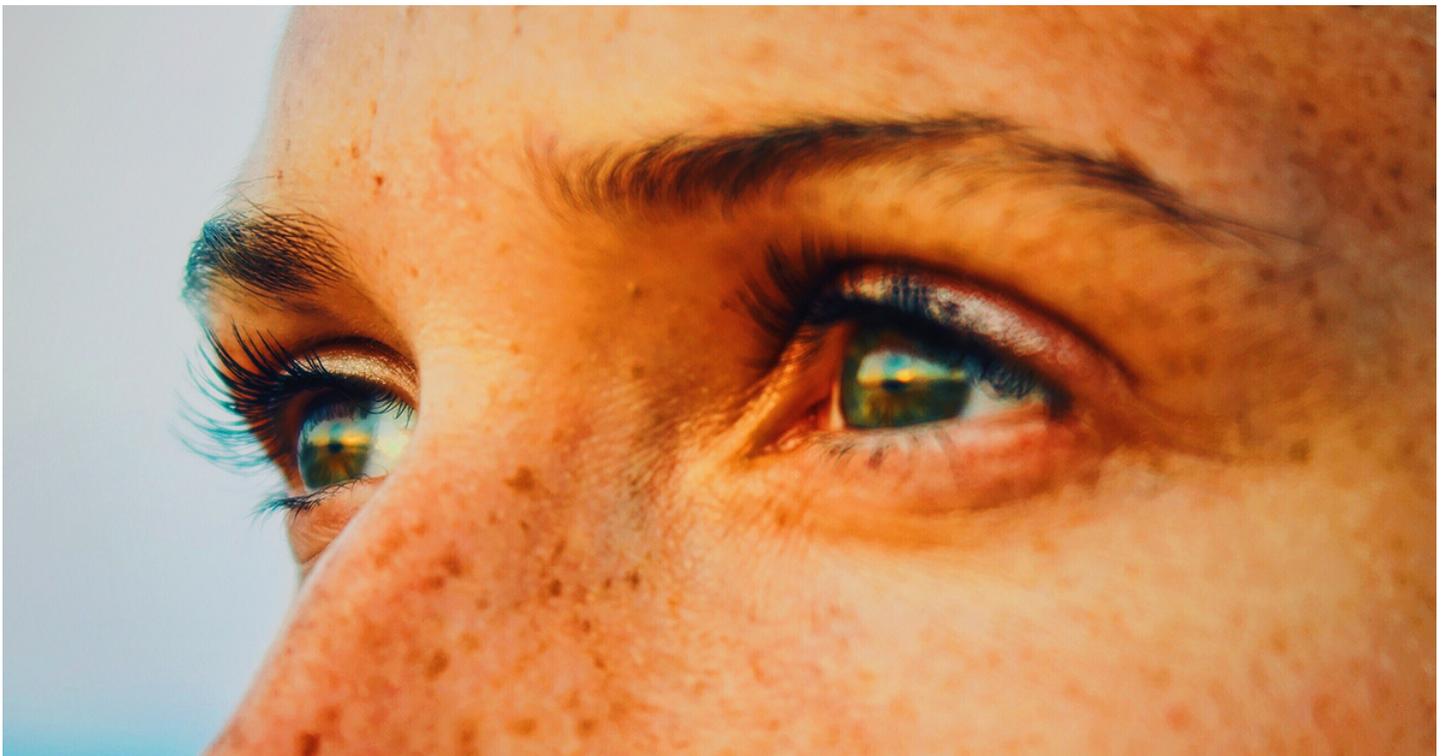


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**Skin cancer is on the rise**, especially among women. With that scary news has come a push to encourage people to wear sunscreen *all* the time—whether or not you're sunbathing—and to

pay attention to sneaky spots that are often forgotten, like [the scalp](#). But there's another area you're likely missing: your eyelids. Yes, that's right. You can get skin cancer on your eyelids.

While it isn't a super common occurrence—it accounts for just 10 percent of all facial skin cancers—skin cancer on the eyelids can be deadly if left ignored. Here, the important risk factors and symptoms of eyelid cancer, plus what to keep in mind to protect yourself this summer and all year round. (Related: [How Often Should You Really Have a Skin Exam?](#))

## The Risk Factors

Simply put: "Eyelid skin cancer is directly related to exposure of UV light to the eyelids," says Memphis, Tennessee-based ophthalmologist [Ming Wang, M.D.](#) That means both the sun's UV rays and tanning beds which, ICYMI, are just as toxic and dangerous to the skin. (Related: [How to Overcome Tanning Bed Addiction Once and for All](#))

Genetics can play a factor, too. "Eyelid cancer is more common in those with fair skin," says Craig A. Vander Kolk, M.D., a plastic surgeon at Baltimore's Mercy Medical Center. "Eyelid cancer risk increases with age and those over 50 are more susceptible to it, as are those who mostly work outdoors," he adds. (Makes sense!)

However, [Anna Guanche, M.D.](#), a dermatologist based in Calabasas, CA, warns that you can never be too careful—she once had a 23-year-old patient with eyelid cancer.

## Eyelid Cancer Symptoms

When you think of your eyelid, you probably picture the area where you apply eye shadow. But according to the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, around 70 percent of eyelid skin cancer cases occur on the *lower* lid, says Dr. Wang.

What does it actually look like? "Eyelid cancer is typically a raised red spot with a little hollow spot in the middle of it. It might bleed, but is not particularly painful," says Dr. Vander Kolk.

Similar to finding skin cancer anywhere else on the body, it's all about knowing what's normal for you and paying attention to any changes. "Concerning features include size change, color change, elevation change, itching, and bleeding," says Dr. Wang. It's also important to take note of any new bumps along your eyelids.

"If you're noticing a loss of your eyelashes—medically called 'madarosis'—along your upper or lower eyelids, this indicates the cancer is generally more invasive and has reached a deeper

layer," says Dr. Vander Kolk. Luckily, eyelid cancer is slow-growing, he says. "The earlier you catch it, the easier it is to take care of."

## How to Protect Yourself

Wearing sunglasses that block 99 percent or more of UVA/UVB rays will help prevent skin cancer to the eye area, says Dr. Guanche, especially while enjoying outdoor activities like surfing or skiing, where light comes from above and is also intensely reflected from below off of the water and snow. (Related: [10 Sports Sunglasses That Are Actually Cute](#))

Oh, and drivers, take note: Just because you're in a car doesn't mean you're shielded from the sun's harmful rays. "Consider covering your windshield/side window tint with clear 3M crystalline, "which can block out almost all UV while driving," suggests Dr. Guanche.

And, of course, carefully apply sunscreen around your eyes. (Dr. Guanche recommends [SkinCeuticals Physical Eye UV Defense SPF 50](#).)

## What to Do If You Suspect You Have Eyelid Cancer

"The best thing to do if you suspect cancer or find a growth on your eyelids is to see a dermatologist who will biopsy the growth by taking a small piece of skin and sending it to a dermatologic pathologist to review the cells under a microscope," says Dr. Guanche. "If it's cancer, then a specialist would remove the remaining cancer cells."

She adds: "Don't be cavalier or self-diagnose; you could be wasting precious time that would better be spent healing the problem."

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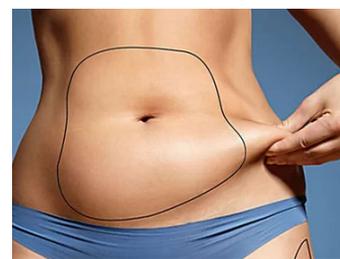
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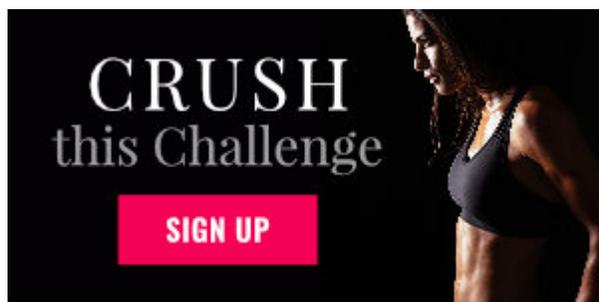
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