In Northern Ireland over 2,500 people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year. There are different types of skin cancer. The most serious is malignant melanoma, causing 170 deaths each year. Most skin cancers are linked to excessive exposure to sunlight. The sun causes wrinkling, dry skin, blotches and premature ageing. The damage can accumulate and may lead to skin cancer. Skin cancers are increasing especially in young people. Sunburn in childhood is believed to increase the risk of developing skin cancer in later life.

A tan is a sign that your skin is trying to protect itself from ultraviolet (UV) damage - not a sign of health! Sunbeds give out ultraviolet rays, which are a direct cause of skin cancer. Often sunbeds use a higher strength of UV rays. UV rays also cause early ageing of skin, resulting in wrinkling, sagging and yellowish brown discolouration. Sunbeds can also cause damage to your eyes such as irritation and conjunctivitis.

Most skin cancers are curable if diagnosed early. Finally, if any of your moles change size, shape or colour, or become itchy, sore, weep or bleed, see a doctor, or if you’ve been in the sun and feel dizzy or exhausted seek medical advice.