**ACTIVITY: The face of melanoma**

**Activity idea**

In this activity, students examine the lifestyle factors that contribute to skin cancer and prepare information about skin cancer for a child or teenage audience.

By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

* describe the lifestyle factors that contribute to skin cancer
* advise a young person on skin cancer and its prevention.

[Introduction/background notes](#Introduction)

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Student handout: [Barbara Davis’s life story](#story)

**Introduction/background**

In this activity, students read memories of Barbara Davis she recounts her life story – different students could role-play the various stages of her life – and discuss lifestyle influences in relation to her cancer.

They then find out more about melanoma and develop a presentation explaining the dangers.

**What you need**

* Copies of the student handout [Barbara Davis’s life story](#story)
* Access to the article [Melanoma](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1326-melanoma)

**What to do**

1. Hand out copies of the student handout [Barbara Davis’s life story](#story) and have students read her memories as she recounts her life story. Different students could role-play the various stages of her life.
2. In small groups or as a class, discuss the following questions:
* What were some lifestyle influences that may have meant that Barbara had a lot of skin cancer?
* What changes did Barbara make to her own life when she had cancer?
* What suggestions did Barbara make to her family about their life outdoors?
* How has technology changed throughout Barbara’s life that could prevent people dying of skin cancer?
1. Have students read the article [Melanoma](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1326-melanoma) and then choose one of these activities to present to the class:
* Develop a pamphlet that a dermatologist could use to give information about skin cancer to students of your age.
* Design a cartoon strip/storyboard about Maurice the Melanocyte to explain the causes and dangers of skin cancer to a primary school-aged student.
* Produce a video or PowerPoint presentation about skin cancer and its prevention for teenagers.

**Student handout: Barbara Davis’s life story**

I am a proud mother of five. My parents are still alive. I have lived all my life in West Auckland, from the time when Lynn Mall was not even there. I love living there with all its beaches and sunshine. I am of Irish descent. I enjoy a good barbecue outdoors and a lot of laughter around the pool. My kids and I have had many a holiday in Paihia and Waihi – any place with sunshine and a beach.

***Barbara growing up***

What a great time it was to grow up in the 60s in New Zealand. Dad was usually at work, but when he was at home, the family would bus to a beach for the day with a picnic of bacon and egg pie. School was OK. Mostly I enjoyed PE and the holidays. I spent a lot of time with my girlfriends chatting for hours, then falling asleep in the Sun. In those days, we used to oil our skin, not block the UV.

***Barbara gets married and has a family (20–39 years)***

I met Wiremu and got married. We had five beautiful children. Mary is now 40 with two kids of her own, Luke and Dean (the twins) are 38, Rachel is 34 and Kyle and Katie are 32. Yes, that is right – more twins.

When I was 35, I went to the doctor and they cut a mole off my leg. Funny that it was on my leg as I am always in track pants – the Sun can’t get to my legs these days. They said the mole was probably not cancerous, that it was the benign sort – the sort of cancer that was not life threatening. They called it a basal cell carcinoma. They took a punch biopsy and they were right. It was not malignant. When I was 37, I had two of those basal cell things cut off my forehead. I hide the scar with a fringe, and I wear sunblock every day.

***Her story continues (40–59 years)***

When I was 42, Wiremu convinced me to visit my friend who was now a dermatologist. Her name is Beena. She took a close look at my body, even the parts that do not see the Sun any more. My friend Beena explained that the damage would have happened when I was a carefree child and teenager. Although my own kids have a little ‘built in’ sun block from their dad (lucky things with their great genes), I don’t, and all those times I was burned have changed the cells in my skin. Beena cut out seven moles and sent them away for analysis.

***Barbara’s life these days (60+ years)***

It has been 6 years since I had a mole removed, but just last week, I went back for my early check-up. My sister has had a mole cut off her back, and my brother died last summer from cancer. I have asked my nieces not to use sunbeds, and I always wear a hat now, and of course, I always put sunblock on my grandkids. My friend the dermatologist has very fancy rooms now. They can now just take a small amount of skin tissue and then look under a microscope to see if they have taken all of the cancerous cells. That way, I don’t get large scars like before, not that I would complain. Better a scar than a coffin.