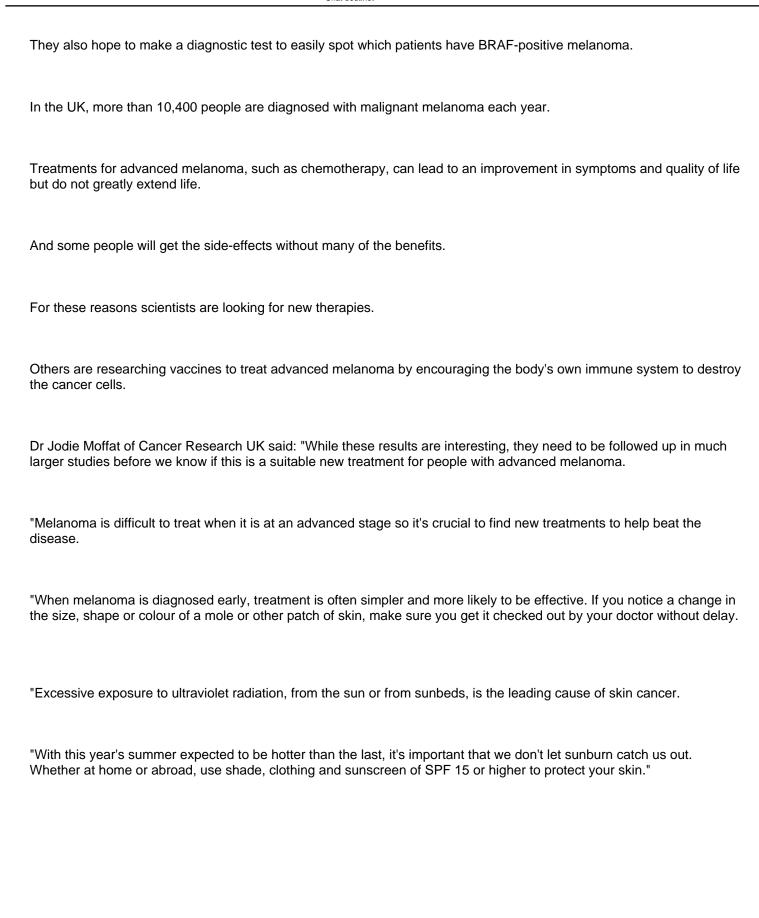
Drug Hope for Advanced Melanoma

Scientists say they have developed a drug that can treat the most deadly form of skin cancer in its most advanced, incurable stages.
Malignant melanoma is the most rapidly increasing cancer in the UK, largely due to sun exposure.
An experimental drug PLX4032 (R7204) could help many patients with incurable disease live longer with the disease in check, early trial results suggest.
Roche and Plexxikon presented the work at a renowned US cancer meeting.
Experts welcomed the findings and urged people to take care when out in the sun this summer, which is tipped to be hot.
PLX4032 works by seeking out and destroying tumour cells carrying the BRAF mutation implicated in 60% malignant melanomas.
This could not only help to shrink the skin cancer, but also delay its spread.
Currently, only a small proportion of people - less than 5% - live more than two years if their cancer has spread around the body.
Early findings
In a phase I study involving 16 patients with BRAF-positive melanoma, over half saw the extent of their cancer reduce by at least 30%.
Patients treated with PLX4032 lived for a median of six months without their disease getting worse and more than half experienced significant shrinkage of their tumours.
This included patients where the cancer had spread to the liver, lung and bone.

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Roche and its partner Plexxikon told delegates at the American Society of Clinical Oncology meeting in Florida that they now plan larger trials to further test the drug's safety and check things like what dose is best.



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