

MALIGNANT MELANOMA

Melanoma is a serious form of skin cancer of melanocytes, the cells that produce dark, protective pigment called melanin. Individual lesions may appear as a dark brown, black or multi-colored growth with irregular borders that can become crusted and bleed.

Melanoma may affect anyone at any age and can occur anywhere on the body. An increased risk of developing this disease is seen in people who have fair skin, light hair and eye color, a family history of melanoma or who have had melanoma in the past. These tumors can arise in or near a preexisting mole or may appear without warning. Melanoma may spread to other organs, making it essential to treat this skin cancer early.

Treatment Options

After sections of tissue from a biopsy of your skin are assessed under a microscope by a dermatopathologist and determined to be melanoma, your dermatologist will discuss several treatment options. Treatment of melanoma is designed according to several variables including location, extent of spread and aggressiveness of the tumor as well as your general health. Forms of treatment for melanoma include surgical excision, Mohs Micrographic Surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. Sometimes lymph nodes are removed. Your dermatologist will help you to better understand these treatment options.

How Can We Protect Ourselves?

Overexposure to sunlight, especially when it results in sunburn and blistering, is a major cause of melanoma. Thus, an important preventive measure to help reduce the risk of melanoma is sun avoidance, especially during peak sunlight hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Limit skin exposure to the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays by wearing sunglasses, broad-brimmed hats and protective, tightly woven clothing. Furthermore, use a broad-spectrum sunscreen rated SPF-30 or higher on all exposed skin, including the lips, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunscreen frequently. Additionally, avoid tanning parlors and artificial tanning devices.

Inspect your entire body for any skin changes and routinely visit your dermatologist for a skin examination. Detecting melanoma early can be lifesaving, since this cancer may be curable in its early stages. Any irregularity in an existing or newly developed pigment skin lesion (asymmetry, uneven border, color variability, diameter of more than 6mm, elevation or bleeding) could be a sign of melanoma and should be examined immediately by a dermatologist.

People with dark complexions can also develop melanoma, especially on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, under nails and in the mouth. Therefore, these areas of the body should be examined closely on a regular basis.

**DON'T BECOME
A STATISTIC**

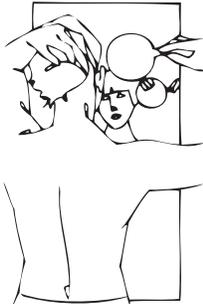
- 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer
- At least 90% of skin cancer is caused by overexposure to the sun
- An estimated 8,700 people will die from melanoma this year

Source: 2010 American Cancer Society

What To Look For And How

Spotting changes in current moles and/or developing lesions early on can help prevent the development and spread of skin cancer. It is important to know what to look for and how to look for it when dealing with early skin cancer detection.

Every month, inspect your entire body for any skin changes and routinely visit your dermatologist for a complete skin examination. Early detection of melanoma can be lifesaving because this cancer may be curable in its early stages. Any irregularity in an existing or newly developed pigmented skin lesion could be a sign of melanoma and should be examined immediately by your dermatologist. These irregularities may include asymmetry, an uneven border, color variations, diameter of more than 6mm or evolving changes of the lesion – all of these irregularities are covered in the ABCDEs of melanoma. If you notice any of the following irregularities in current skin lesions, see a dermatologist immediately.

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| STEP 1 | STEP 2 | STEP 3 | STEP 4 | STEP 5 |
| Examine your body front and back in the mirror, then right and left sides, arms raised. | Bend elbows and look carefully at forearms and upper arms and palms. | Look at the backs of legs and feet, spaces between toes and soles. | Examine back of neck and scalp with a hand mirror. Part hair for a closer look at scalp. | Finally, check back and buttocks with a hand mirror. |

Images and content provided by the American Academy of Dermatology



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To learn more about the services Dermpath Diagnostics provides and to obtain more information on common skin disorders, please visit us at

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