



Your Guide to Early Detection

When it comes to melanoma, early detection is key. **Visit a dermatologist for an annual, full-body skin exam and perform self-skin checks monthly.** Take note of any new lesions or moles and any changes to existing ones. A friend, partner, or spouse can look at your back. Your salon stylist can look for growths on your scalp.

Follow this simple 'ABCDE' guide. If lesions or moles do not pass one or more of the following descriptions, see your dermatologist. Also look for nodules (or lumps) growing under your skin.

A: Asymmetry. If you were to divide the mole in half vertically would it be the same on both sides? What if you divide it in half horizontally, or diagonally? Your mole should be the same no matter how you divide it in half.

B: Border. What does the border of your mole look like? Is it smooth? Is it irregular, blurred or poorly defined? The border of your mole should be smooth, well defined, and even.

C: Color. Moles come in different colors: black, white, red, brown, and even blue. Your mole should be the same color throughout; not have different shades of the same color or different colors from one area to the next.

D: Diameter. Melanoma can appear in any size mole, but most healthy moles do not exceed the size of a pencil eraser, about ¼ of an inch or 6 millimeters. If your mole is bigger it should be examined by a dermatologist.

E: Evolving. Has your mole changed over time? Take a picture of it every month so you can compare each time you do a self-skin exam. You are looking for any differences in color, shape, or size. Is the mole itching or bleeding?

If your mole displays any characteristics outlined above, see a dermatologist. Explain that you have a mole that is concerning. While you may be perfectly healthy, it is **ALWAYS** better to have your skin checked than it is to wait.

Skin Cancer in Skin of Color

While skin cancer can appear on any skin surface, the common locations for melanoma on people of color are on non-sun-exposed skin including the bottoms of the feet, palms, finger- and toenails, and inside of the mouth. Skin cancer appears differently on different shades of skin. People of color may find these resources helpful:

Skin of Color Society: <https://skinfofcolorsociety.org/dermatology-education/melanoma/>

American Academy of Dermatology: <https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/skin-cancer/types/common/melanoma/skin-color>

Prevention

Reduce your risk for developing melanoma and other skin cancers by protecting your skin from over exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun and indoor tanning beds.

- Wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Many mineral-based sunscreens are available including those with titanium dioxide and zinc oxide as the main ingredients.
- Wear sun-protective clothing that has an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) label. Wear hats and sunglasses. Limit sun exposure between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm. Do not use tanning beds.

Protect Your Skin. Protect Yourself. Protect Your Life