HOLTON DIRECTCARE

Skin Cancer, Scary Spots, and Sun Safety

The Sun and your Skin: The Basics

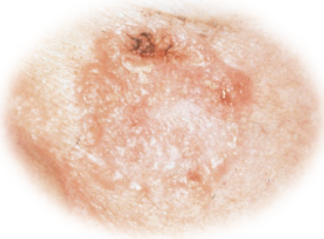
- The sun has two types of damaging rays:
  - UVA – damages the structure of your skin causing wrinkles and signs of premature aging
  - UVB – results in tanning and burning of your skin
- Your skin produces melanin (what gives color to your skin, hair, and eyes) as a way protect it from harmful UV rays.
- Skin cancer occurs when the UV rays damage your skin, causing cells to grow out of control.
- One in five people will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.
  - While your risk increases as you age, skin cancer can appear any time. In fact, it is the second most common cause of cancer in females 15-29, so it's important for everyone to take care of their skin!
- Early detection is key! Almost all skin cancer can be cured if treated early.

The Big 3 of Skin Cancer

Basal Cell Carcinoma

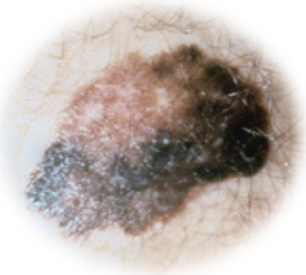
- Usually appear on sun exposed areas (face, scalp, ear, arm, leg, etc.)
- Appearance: small, pink/pearly, dome shaped bump
- These rarely spread to other parts of your body, however they can do significant damage to the surrounding skin so it is important to have these removed early

Squamous Cell Carcinoma



- Usually appear on sun exposed areas
- Appearance: Crusty/scaly patch with a red, irritated base. May also appear as an ulcer that won't heal
- Like a basal cell carcinoma, it does not spread but it can destroy the surrounding skin and tissue, so get these treated early

Melanoma



- The most aggressive type of skin cancer
- Usually appear on sun-exposed areas
- May appear suddenly or develop over time from an existing mole
- If caught early, Melanoma can be easily removed. However, if left untreated it can spread, so get suspicious spots checked!

The ABCDE's of Melanoma

- How do you know whether a spot is a normal mole or if you should be concerned for cancer? Use your ABCDE's
  - **A**symmetry – one half does not look like the other
  - **B**order – uneven, ragged, or poorly defined border
  - **C**olor – multiple or uneven coloring throughout the lesion. May be shades of tan, brown, black, red, or even dark blue.
  - **D**iameter – usually > 6mm (roughly the size of a pencil eraser)
  - **E**volving – the mole changes in shape, size, or color over time

Helpful tip: normal moles aren't always brown, they can be black, tan, or even dark blue! The giveaway that they are normal is that they are one solid color.

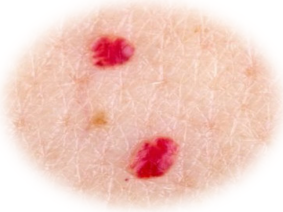
Scary Sounding (and Looking) but Safe Spots

As you age all sorts of spots can appear, so how are you supposed to tell if they are cancer? The best answer? If you're concerned, have your doctor look at it. But to help ease your concern for that weird spot you find on vacation, here are some tips for identifying non-cancerous skin lesions.

- **Seborrheic Keratosis**
  - **What is it?** An overgrowth of the outer protective layer of your skin
  - **What does it look like?** Tan/brown lesion with a rough, warty surface. Sometimes said to look like a piece of stuck on chewing gum!
  - **Are they dangerous?** No, but they can get irritated from chafing against clothing

- **Dermatofibroma**
  - **What is it?** An overgrowth of the structural cells of your skin
  - **What does it look like?** A firm, raised flesh colored or brown lesion that dimples when it is squeezed
  - **Are they dangerous?** No, but they can become tender or itchy

- **Cherry Angioma**
  - **What is it?** An abnormal collection of dilated blood vessels
  - **What does it look like?** A small, round, bright or dark red lesion
  - **Are they dangerous?** No, but they can occasionally bleed with trauma



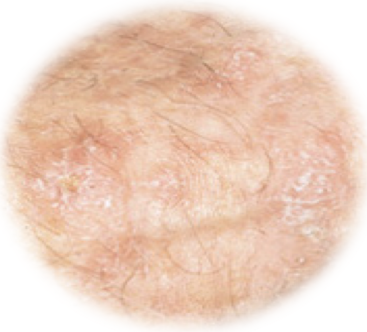
Should I have these lesions removed?

- These lesions are not cancerous and do not need to be removed. But, you can have them taken off for cosmetic reasons or if they irritate you.

So my spot isn't cancer, but could it become cancer?

- Most non-cancerous lesions cannot develop into cancer – however there is one pre-cancerous lesion to look out for.

- **Actinic Keratosis**
  - Like skin cancer, these spots are caused by the sun's UV rays and can occur on any part of the body exposed to the sun
  - Appearance: small rough patch that can be pale/flesh colored or red and irritated
  - These may flake off and disappear but they can return so you should always have them examined and treated



Keeping Your Skin Safe

When am I at risk?

- Whenever you are in the sun!
- UV rays are always present, even when it's cloudy!
- Be extra cautious when you are around snow, water, and sand (aka your beach and ski vacations) as these all reflect those damaging UV rays and can cause you to burn quicker.

How can I prevent skin cancer?

- Find shade, especially when the sun is the strongest between 10am-4pm.
- Wear protective clothing when you're outside – sunglasses with UV protection, wide-brimmed hats, and clothes that cover your arms and legs.
- Always wear sunscreen
  - Look for sunscreen that is water, resistant, broad spectrum, and at least SPF 30
  - Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before you go outside
  - Reapply every 2 hours or after getting wet (this includes sweating!)
  - Don't forget your lips! Skin cancer can occur on your lips to pick up some lip balm with SPF
- Check your skin regularly - You know your body the best so keep an eye out for new or changing spots. It's better to have a normal mole double checked than to miss cancer.
- Some medications can increase your sensitivity to the sun – just ask your doctor if you're unsure.

Is there a safe way to tan?

- **NO!** A tan is your skin's protective response to the injury caused by the sun's UV rays. That means that golden summer glow is actually a sign of skin damage.
- The artificial UV rays from a tanning bed as just as dangerous as those from the sun.
- The one exception? Self tanning spray or lotion is a safe way to get that sun-kissed look without causing damage to your skin.

Want more Information?

Visit the American Academy of Dermatology website:
https://www.aad.org/public/spot-skin-cancer/learn-about-skin-cancer/prevent