

Melanoma of the Skin in Ohio--

What do I Need to Know?

Comprehensive Cancer Control Program
Office of Healthy Ohio
Ohio Department of Health



July 2011 - UV Safety Month

What is melanoma of the skin?

Melanoma is the most serious type of cancer of the skin.

The chance of developing melanoma of the skin increases with age, but this cancer does affect people of all ages. While melanoma of the skin can occur on any skin surface, in men melanoma of the skin is often found on the trunk, while in women it often develops on the lower legs. Melanoma of the skin is rare in African American people and others with dark skin.



How does melanoma of the skin affect the U.S. and Ohio populations?

- Melanoma of the skin is the sixth-most common cancer in both men and women in Ohio.
- During 2003-2007, an average of 2,222 new cases of melanoma skin cancer were diagnosed each year among Ohio residents.
- In Ohio between 2003-2007, approximately 70% of individuals who developed melanoma of the skin were 50 and over.
- Currently, a man living in the United States has a 1 in 55 lifetime risk, while a woman has a 1 in 78 lifetime risk of developing invasive melanoma of the skin.
- White males and females in Ohio are significantly more likely to develop melanoma of the skin than African American males and females.
- White males in Ohio are more likely to develop melanoma of the skin than white females in Ohio.
- White males in Ohio had the highest rate of death from melanoma of the skin compared to other gender/race groups.
- Melanoma skin cancer deaths account for 1.3 percent of all deaths from cancer in Ohio.
- Mortality from melanoma of the skin was relatively stable from 1991 to 2007 in Ohio.
- The African American melanoma of the skin mortality rate was 86 percent lower than the rate for whites in 2007.

What causes melanoma of the skin and who is at risk?

The exact cause of most melanoma skin cancer is not yet known. Your risk is considered higher than average if:

- You are a male.
- You are older (however; this is one of the most common cancers among adolescents and young adults).
- You have more than 50 ordinary moles.
- You are white or have fair skin that burns or freckles easily.
- You have a personal history of melanoma of the skin.
- You have two or more relatives that have had melanoma of the skin.
- You have a weakened immune system.
- You have a history of severe, blistering sunburns.
- You have a history of spending a lot of time in the sun.
- You have a large number of moles that are a type of mole called Dysplastic nevi.

Are there symptoms of melanoma of the skin?

One of the first signs of melanoma is a change in the size, shape, color or feel of an existing mole. Most melanomas have a black or blue-black area.

Remembering “ABCDE” can help you remember what to watch for:

The “**ABCDE**” of Melanoma of the Skin

- ***Asymmetry – One half of a mole does not match the other.***
- ***Border – The edges are irregular, ragged, notched or blurred. Pigment may spread to the surrounding skin.***
- ***Color – The color is not the same all over and may include shades of black or brown and there may be patches of pink, red, white or blue.***
- ***Diameter – The spot is larger than ¼ inch (about the size of a pencil eraser) but melanomas can be smaller than this.***
- ***Evolving – The mole has changed over the past few weeks or months.***

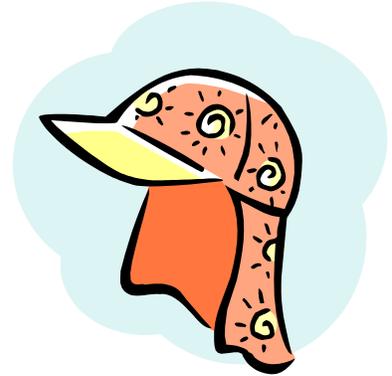
Melanomas can vary greatly in appearance. Many show all of the “ABCDE” features, but others show changes in only one or two of the areas. If you have a question or concern about something on your skin, see your doctor.

Early cancer usually does not cause pain. It is important not to wait to feel pain before seeing a doctor.

Are there things I can do to help prevent melanoma of the skin?

Reducing your exposure to the sun (UV Radiation) can help reduce the risk of melanoma of the skin. Here's how:

- Limit or avoid exposure to the midday sun whenever possible (from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).
- If you are outside, wear long sleeves, long pants and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Protect yourself from sun that can penetrate light clothing, windshields and windows.
- Wear sunglasses that have UV-absorbing lenses. The label should specify that the lenses block at least 99 percent of UVA and UVB radiation.
- Protect your skin by using a lotion, cream or gel that contains sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, reapplying frequently.
- Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps which are additional sources of UV radiation.
- Identify and remove abnormal moles.
- [Click Here](#) for latest sunscreen guidelines



Is there a way to find melanoma of the skin or precancerous skin conditions early?

In addition to the “ABCDE” self-examination of your moles, you should talk to your doctor about a schedule for skin check-ups. Your doctor’s advice will be based on your personal and family history, medical history and risk factors.

A skin examination is often part of a routine checkup by a health care provider. If necessary, you may be referred to a dermatologist (skin doctor) for further examination.

What are the diagnostic tests for melanoma of the skin?



If a doctor suspects a spot on the skin may be melanoma, a biopsy of the skin will need to be performed. This type of biopsy can usually be done in your doctor’s office with a local anesthesia. Your doctor will remove or take a sample of the skin growth. The sample will then be checked for any cancer cells.

Does the stage of diagnosis make a difference?

Regular screening tests by a health care professional can result in the detection of melanoma of the skin at earlier stages, when treatment is more likely to be successful.

- When melanoma of the skin is found early (at the local stage) the five-year survival likelihood is 98 percent.
- Eight percent of all melanoma skin cancers in Ohio are diagnosed at the regional or distant stage, when survival is not as high.

Is skin cancer screening covered by insurance?

Many insurance companies cover skin cancer screenings as part of a routine checkup. Check with your health insurance provider to determine your skin cancer screening benefits.

If I am without health insurance and live in Ohio, is there a way to obtain skin cancer screening?

Many providers know the importance of screening and will work with you to ensure you can get the best screening for you based on your medical and family history. Some communities offer no-cost or reduced-cost screening programs to people without financial resources. Other communities have medical providers who are willing to provide these services on a case-by-case basis. To find a resource in your area, please contact the American Cancer Society at 1-888-227-6446.

What's being done in Ohio to increase access to melanoma of the skin cancer screening for persons with financial need?

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has been working with groups in many communities to increase screening opportunities and prevent melanoma of the skin. In 2000, ODH received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to increase these efforts for all cancers. Our main goal is to help local groups in their efforts to increase cancer screening programs with the goal of decreasing overall cancer incidence and death in Ohio.

For additional information about melanoma skin cancer initiatives in Ohio, please contact the Comprehensive Cancer Program, Ohio Department of Health at (614) 466-2144.

References Used In This Data Bulletin

American Cancer Society, Connection Database <http://www.cancer.org>.

American Cancer Society Ohio Division, Ohio Department of Health, The Ohio State University. *Ohio Cancer Facts & Figures 2010*. Columbus: American Cancer Society; 2010.

National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin>.

National Cancer Institute, *What you need to know about Melanoma*, 2006 31 Center Drive, MSC 2850, Bethesda, MD 20892-2580.

Stage of Diagnosis

in situ – Noninvasive cancer that has not penetrated surrounding tissue.

Local – A malignant tumor confined entirely to the organ of origin.

Regional – A malignant tumor that has extended beyond the organ of origin directly into surrounding organs or tissues or into regional lymph nodes.

Distant – A malignant tumor that has spread to other parts of the body (distant organs, tissues and/or lymph nodes) remote from the primary tumor.

Unstaged/Unknown – Insufficient information is available to determine the stage or extent of the disease at diagnosis.