

Skin Cancer, Melanoma, and Moles

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Skin Cancer Overview

- Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers
- Nearly half of all cancers in the United States are skin cancers
- Over one million skin cancers are diagnosed in the United States each year

Risk Factors for Skin Cancer

- Unprotected or excessive exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation
- Occupational exposure to various toxic substances
- Family history of skin cancer
- History of severe sunburns as a child
- Multiple or atypical appearing moles

Signs and Symptoms of Skin Cancer

- A new growth, not previously present on the skin
- Scaliness, oozing, or bleeding from a bump or nodule on the skin
- An area of skin that stays irritated red or itchy
- An area of skin that keeps cracking or bleeding
- A colored spot that gets larger

Not all changes in the skin are cancer, but you should see your doctor if you notice changes that last longer than two weeks

Basal Cell Skin Cancer

- Over 90% of skin cancers are basal cell cancers
- It is the least aggressive form of skin cancer
- Causes damage by growing and by invading surrounding tissues

Basal cell tumors can take on many forms.



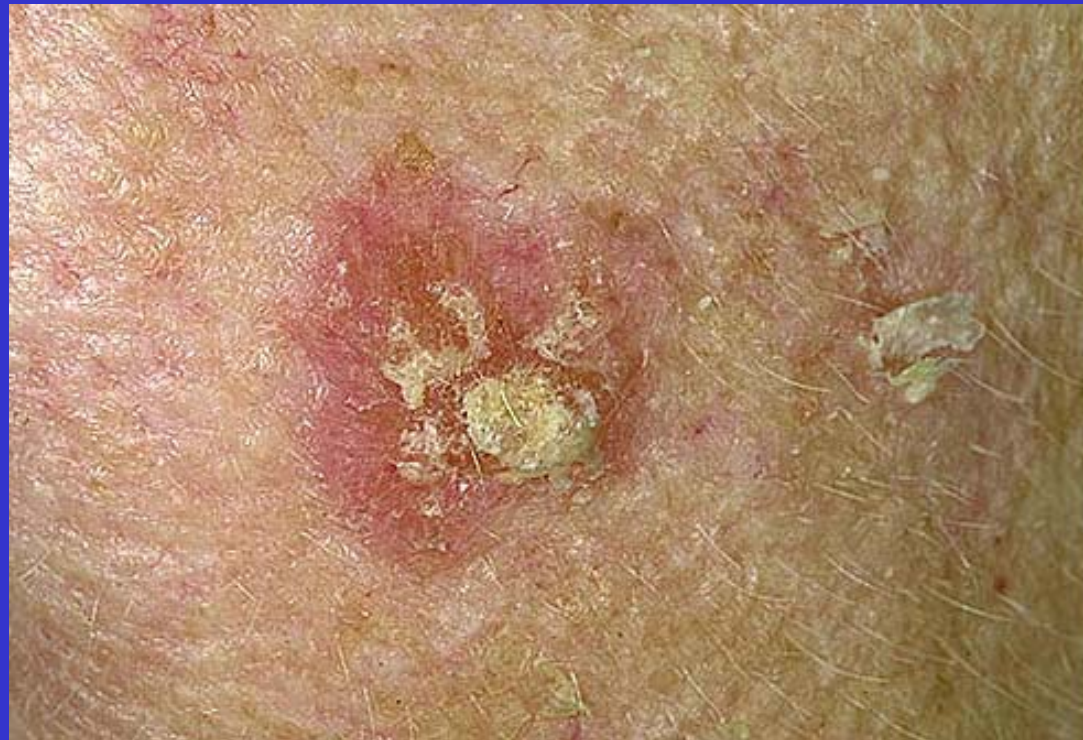
Squamous Cell Skin Cancer

- Less common than basal cell cancer (3:1 ratio of basal cell to squamous cell cancer)
- Can spread to other parts of the body, especially lower lip squamous cell cancer

Squamous Cell Carcinoma



Actinic keratosis (a “pre-cancer”) can be hard to distinguish from true skin cancer. This is a picture of an actinic keratosis.



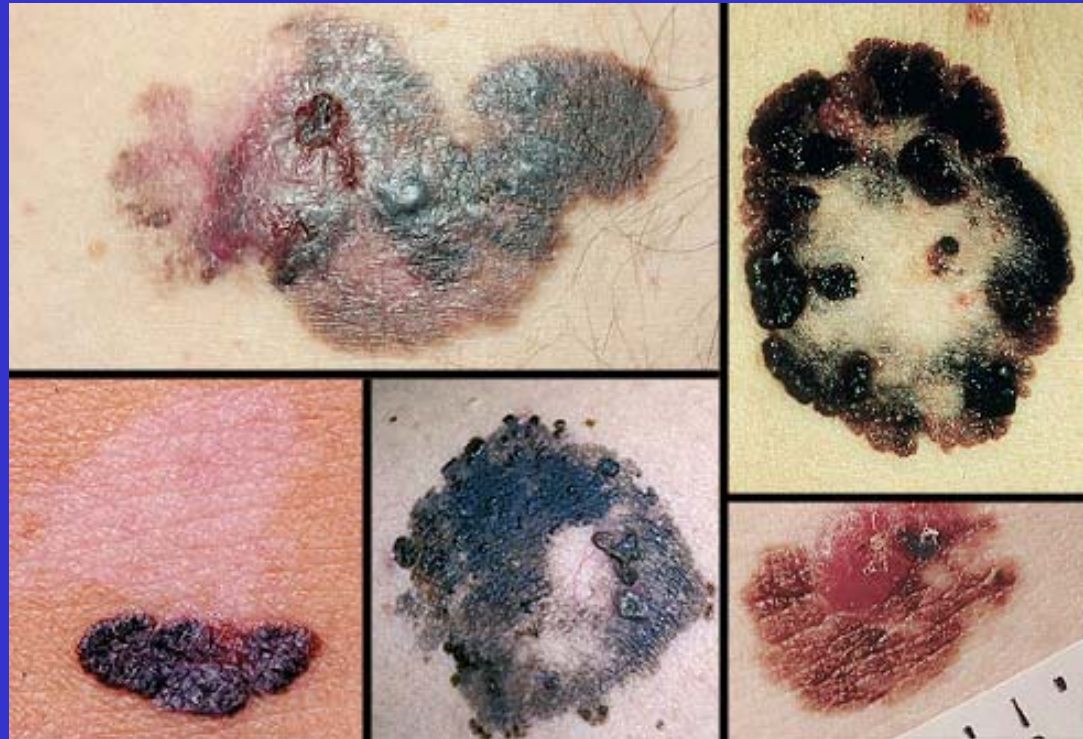
Many times, a physician cannot tell the diagnosis simply by looking at the skin.

Biopsy is frequently required to determine the correct diagnosis

Melanoma

- Most serious and aggressive type of skin cancer
- Has the potential to spread to other areas of the body, including major organs
- Life threatening if melanoma spreads to other locations
- 60,000 new melanomas in 2005

Melanoma can vary in appearance



What About My Moles?

- Moles are very common
- Average caucasian has about 20 moles
- Most moles are harmless
- Some moles exhibit danger signs
- The Problem: When is a “mole” actually something else, such as a melanoma?

Characteristics of Normal Moles

- Sharp margin
- Uniform color
- Symmetrical shape
- Smooth outline or contour
- Smaller than the diameter of a pencil eraser
- Single uniform color

Moles can appear anywhere on the skin, alone or in groups



Moles are usually brown, tan, pink, or the same color as the skin.



Age Spots (Solar Lentigo)



Worrisome Moles – The “A,B,C,D,and E” Signs

- A - Asymmetry, where one half does not match the other half
- B - Border irregularity, where the edges are ragged or blurred and not sharp
- C - Color, in which the pigmentation is not uniform. Looks mottled or splotchy
- D - Diameter, where the width of the mole is greater than six mm (Larger than a pencil eraser)
- E - Elevation, in which part of the mole is elevated above the skin surface in a non-uniform manner

“A” - Check for *Asymmetry*: Draw an imaginary line down the middle and compare halves.



“B” - Moles with *Blurred Irregular Borders* are cause for concern.



“C” - Notice this suspicious mole has several different shades of *Color*



“D” - See a dermatologist if the mole has a *Diameter* larger than a pencil eraser (6 mm or 1/4 inch).



“E” - Have moles evaluated by a dermatologist if a portion appears *Elevated* above the skin



Worrisome Moles – “The Ugly Duckling Sign”

- The “ugly duckling” is a mole that looks or acts differently than all of the other moles on the body.
- This would include moles that ulcerate, itch, bleed, change shape, change color, or look different from the other moles on the body

An Ugly Duckling



Skin Self Examination

- Try to examine your skin once a month
- The best time to examine the skin is after a bath or shower, while the skin is still wet
- Use a full length mirror if possible
- Start at the head and work your way down
- Look at all areas of the body
- Think in terms of “A,B, C, D, E” and “ugly ducklings”

Keep an eye out for dangerous moles and other changes in the skin

Take simple precautions to protect yourself against skin cancer



The biggest cause of skin cancer
is sun exposure

The single most important factor
in preventing skin cancer is
limiting exposure to the sun!

Tips on Limiting Sun Exposure

- Avoid the sun. Seek shade or remain indoors
- Limit exposure to midday sun. The sun is strongest between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM
- Wear a wide brim hat
- Cover-up: Wear tightly woven, loose fitting, full-length clothing.
- Wear sunglasses that block 99-100% of UV light to protect against cataracts and skin damage

Tips on Sunscreen

- Always use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15
- Reapply the sunscreen every two hours or after working, swimming, or exercising outdoors
- Sunscreen must be broad-spectrum, filtering out both UVA and UVB light
- Don't forget to apply sunscreen to ears and to use a lip balm with sunscreen for the lips

*We are pleased to acknowledge
that some of the slides in this
presentation come from the
Internet at www.medicinenet.com*