

How can I take care of myself?

Follow your health care provider's recommended treatment and keep all your follow-up appointments. To help take care of yourself during your treatment and recovery, follow these guidelines:

- * Exercise according to your provider's advice.
- * Get plenty of rest.
- * Maintain a healthy diet.
- * Drink less alcohol.
- * Drink 4 to 8 glasses of water a day.
- * Do relaxation exercises.
- * Discuss with your health care provider or a mental health professional the events in your life that make you anxious. Ask for help in developing positive ways to cope with these events.

How can I help prevent recurrence of melanoma?

It is important to follow your health care provider's treatment plan to prevent recurrence. In addition:

- * Protect yourself from exposure to the sun by wearing a broad-brimmed hat and always use protective skin lotion with paraaminobenzoic acid (PABA) or other proven ingredients such as cinnamate.
- * Use a chemical sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 25 or higher.
- * Stay out of the sun from 11 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., the hours of strongest sunlight.
- * Keep the follow-up schedule set by your health care provider.
- * Be aware of any signs or symptoms of recurrence and report them promptly.

Locally, skin cancer (melanoma is a type of skin cancer) is important and represents the third most common cancer after breast and cervical cancer.

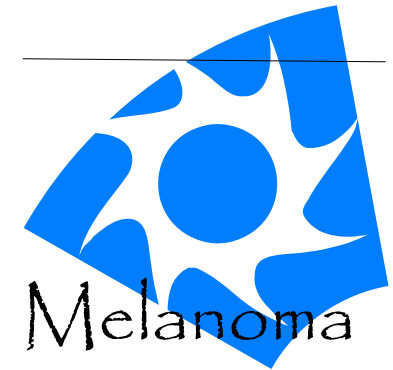
In men, it is the most common cancer.



Information contained in this booklet is meant for informational purposes only and should not substitute the visit to your doctor nor his/her advice for your health care.

Accuracy of the content is current to the date of printing.

January 2009



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What is Melanoma

What is melanoma?

Melanoma is a cancer that starts in a type of skin cells called melanocytes. These cells make melanin, the pigment that colors the skin, hair, and iris of the eye.

Because melanoma is the most deadly form of skin cancer, early detection is important. Melanoma often spreads and causes cancerous tumors in other parts of the body.

How does it occur?

Normally, melanocytes slowly make melanin through several chemical steps. This chemical process can be changed by things like sunlight, heat, heavy metals, and radiation. These changes can cause the cells to become cancer cells that start growing uncontrollably.

You may be at higher risk for melanoma if:

- * You have a family history of melanomas.
- * You have a fair complexion and light-colored eyes.
- * You have had a lot of exposure to the sun, especially when you were young.
- * You have had a lot of exposure to tar and arsenic products.
- * You have a history of sunburns, especially one or more severe sunburns before you were 18.
- * You have many pigmented skin blemishes (nevi), including freckles and moles.

What are the symptoms?

Melanoma usually develops on exposed areas of skin, but it may occur anywhere on the body, including under the nails and in the eyes. In white men, melanomas tend to develop on the trunk, head, or neck. White women tend to get them more on the arms and lower legs. Blacks and other people with dark skins get them more on the palms and soles of the feet.

The most common symptom in the early stages of melanoma is a change in a mole you may have had since childhood. The mole may:

- * get larger
- * become darker, lighter, or patchy; change color from brown to blue, black, red, or white
- * develop an irregular or dark spreading border
- * itch
- * turn into a scab and not heal for weeks
- * become lumpy (seem to grow thicker)
- * bleed for no apparent cause or just bleed easily
- * become scaly or ulcerlike.

Melanoma also may develop on normal-looking skin where there is no mole.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will:

- * review your symptoms
- * examine you and record the size and color of the mole or growth
- * order a biopsy of any suspicious molelike growth or affected area of skin (for a biopsy a sample of skin is removed and examined in the lab).

- * You may also need:
- * blood tests
- * a chest x-ray
- * urine tests.
- * You may have liver, brain, and bone scans.
- * If you have advanced melanoma, your health care provider will do a careful physical exam to look for:
- * affected areas at other sites on your skin
- * enlarged lymph nodes
- * jaundice or enlargement of your liver and spleen.



How is it treated?

Surgery is the usual treatment. The entire melanoma, including a wide border of healthy tissue, is removed to ensure that no cancerous tissue remains. In some cases, you may have a skin graft or other type of repair. Although no further treatment is usually required if the cancer has not spread, you will need follow-up appointments with your health care provider. If the melanoma has spread to other parts of your body, treatment may include chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, or surgery.