

## Risk Factors

There are several factors that increase one's risk of developing skin cancer, including:

- Sun sensitivity
- Excessive exposure to sunlight and other forms of ultraviolet radiation or a history of excessive sun exposure
- Fair complexion
- Family history of skin cancer
- A weakened immune system
- Past history of skin cancer
- Use of tanning booths
- Occupational exposure to coal tar, pitch, creosote, arsenic compounds, or radiation.

## Facts

- Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers, accounting for nearly half of all cancer cases.
- When diagnosed early, skin cancer is highly curable.
- More than one million cases of non-melanoma skin cancers are diagnosed in the United States each year.
- The most serious form of skin cancer is melanoma.
- The American Cancer Society estimated that 2,240 cases of melanoma were diagnosed in Michigan during 2009.

## What You Can Do To Prevent Skin Cancer

- Avoid the sun between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Seek shade. Look for shade, especially in the middle of the day when the sun's rays are strongest. Practice the shadow rule and teach it to your children. If your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are at their strongest.
- Slip on a shirt. Cover up with protective clothing to guard as much skin as possible when you are out in the sun. Choose comfortable clothes made of tightly woven fabrics that you cannot see through when held up to the light.
- Slop on sunscreen. Use sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher. Apply a generous amount (about a palmful) before going outdoors and reapply after swimming, toweling dry, or perspiring. Use sunscreen even on hazy or overcast days.
- Slap on a hat. Cover your head with a wide-brimmed hat, shading your face, ears, and neck. If you choose a baseball cap, remember to protect your ears and neck with sunscreen.
- Wear sunglasses with 99-100 percent UVA/UVB absorption to provide optimal protection for the eyes and surrounding skin.
- Follow these practices to protect your skin even on cloudy or overcast days. UV rays travel through clouds.

## Skin Cancer Resources

American Academy of Dermatology  
[www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org)

American Cancer Society  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin)

National Cancer Institute  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

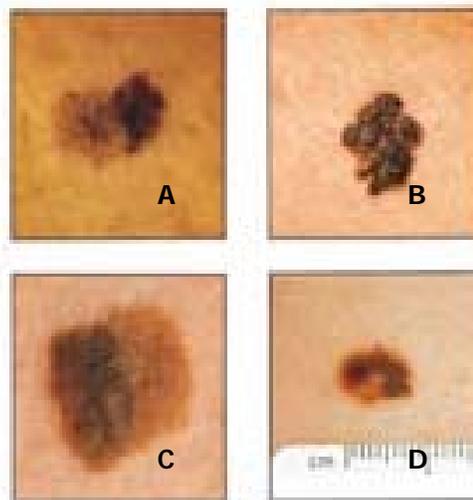
National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention  
[www.skincancerprevention.org](http://www.skincancerprevention.org)

Skin Cancer Foundation  
[www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org)

# The ABCD Rule for the Early Detection of Melanoma

Almost everyone has moles. The vast majority of moles are perfectly harmless. A change in a mole's appearance is a sign that you should see your doctor. Here's the simple ABCD rule to help you remember the important signs of melanoma and other skin cancers:

- **A** is for **ASYMMETRY**: One-half of a mole or birthmark does not match the other.
- **B** is for **BORDER**: The edges are irregular, ragged, notched, or blurred.
- **C** is for **COLOR**: The color is not the same all over, but may have differing shades of brown or black, sometimes with patches of red, white, or blue.
- **D** is for **DIAMETER**: The area is larger than 6 millimeters (about ¼ inch – the size of pencil eraser) or is growing larger.



Other important signs of melanoma include changes in size, shape, or color of a mole or the appearance of a new spot. Some melanomas do not fit the ABCD rule described above so it is particularly important for you to be aware of changes in skin lesions or a new lesion.

## Other Skin Cancer Warning Signs

- A sore that does not heal
- A new growth
- Spread of pigment from the border of a spot to a surrounding area
- Redness or a new swelling beyond the border
- Change in sensation – itchiness, tenderness, or pain
- Change in the surface of a mole – scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or the appearance of a bump or nodule

## How to Examine Your Skin

- Get familiar with your skin and your own pattern of moles, freckles, blemishes, and birthmarks.
- Check your skin monthly and be alert to changes in the number, size, shape, or color of spots on your skin or sores that do not heal.

The best time to do this simple exam is after a bath or shower. Use a full-length and a hand mirror so you can check your skin from head to toe, noting anything new.

