

# MALIGNANT MELANOMA

Melanoma is an extremely serious form of skin cancer responsible for about 75% of the deaths related to skin cancer, even though it accounts for only 1-2% of all skin cancers. If melanoma is identified and treated early, it is highly curable. It is much more likely to spread, if untreated, than other forms of skin cancer.

Melanocytes are the cells that produce melanin, the dark pigment that protects the deeper layers of the skin from the harmful effects of the sun. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from sunlight or tanning beds can cause these cells to grow out of control and form tumors called melanoma.

Melanoma affects people of all ages. People who have had melanoma, have a family history of melanoma, or those with light hair, fair skin and light colored eyes are at higher risk.

## What are the warning signs?

Melanomas can resemble or even develop from moles. Moles are brown spots or growths on the skin and are usually harmless, but not always. It is extremely important to check your skin frequently and look for the **ABCDE warnings of melanoma**:

**Asymmetry** - if the mole is irregularly shaped or the two halves of the mole do not match;



**Border** - if the edges of the mole are uneven, scalloped or notched;



**Color** - if the mole is a variety of colors or different shades of brown, tan or black;



**Diameter** - if the mole is larger in diameter than a pencil eraser (1/4 inch or 6 mm);



**Evolving** - if the mole changes in any way (size, shape, color) or begins to bleed, itch or form a crust.



## Reducing the risk of Melanoma



### Avoid overexposure to sunlight.

Following sun protection guidelines can help reduce the risks associated with atypical nevus, especially between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm when the sun is directly overhead. It is important to remember that, even on overcast days, damaging ultraviolet rays can pass through clouds. Use caution when around water, sand, and snow because all can reflect the sun's rays.



### Take protective measures.

Wear broad-brimmed hats, tightly-woven clothing, and sunglasses.



### Use sunscreen.

Choose a sunscreen with minimum SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of 30 with protection from both UVA and UVB rays. Reapply often on all exposed skin, including the lips.



### Always avoid artificial tanning devices and tanning salons.



### Check your skin regularly.

Examine your entire body, and report any suspicious lesions to your dermatologist.