

# MELANOMA AWARENESS MONTH

OSF GUILFORD SQUARE— PLASTIC SURGERY DEPARTMENT

MAY 2018

**“It is estimated that over 91,000 new cases of Melanoma will be diagnosed this year”**

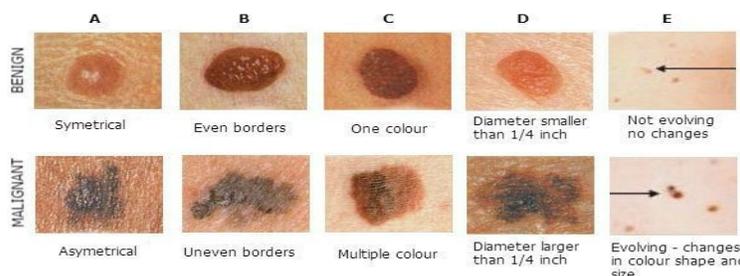
Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer. Melanoma only accounts for about 1% of skin cancers diagnosed, however, it is far more dangerous and deadly because it’s more likely to spread to other parts of the body if it’s not detected early enough. The rates of melanoma have been rising over the last 30 years.

Cancer forms when cells in the body start to grow out of control. Skin cancer and melanoma account for nearly half of all types of cancers diagnosed. Melanoma is a cancer that usually starts in a type of skin cell called “Melanocytes”. These cells make a brown pigment called melanin, which gives the skin its tan or brown color. Melanin helps to protect the skin from some of the harmful effects of the sun’s damaging UV (ultraviolet) rays. Most melanoma cells still produce melanin, so melanoma tumors are usually brown or black. Some melanomas do not make melanin so those tumors can appear pink, tan or even white. Melanomas can develop anywhere on the skin, but they usually start on the chest and back in men, and on the legs in women. The face and neck are also common sites but melanoma can additionally form on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, under the nails and on internal surfaces such as the mouth.

More than 90% of skin cancer is caused by excessive exposure to harmful UV rays. UV rays damage the DNA of skin cells, which causes skin cancer when the cells grow out of control. Sunlight is the main source of UV rays, along with tanning beds and sun lamps. Frequent sunburns, especially during the childhood years, are suspected of playing a role in melanoma development. One or more blistering sunburns during childhood or teenage years can cause skin cancer many years later. The risk of melanoma is 20 times higher for those with fair/white skin, red or blonde hair, blue or green eyes and light skin that freckles or burns easily. Men have a higher rate of melanoma after the age of 50 but the risk is higher for women, under the age of 50.

There is no guaranteed way to prevent melanoma but there are several things you can do to lower your risk of getting melanoma and other skin cancers. Use a broad spectrum sunscreen that protects against UVA/UVB rays and re-apply every 90 minutes when outdoors. Wear protective sunglasses, hats and clothing. Stay in the shade during peak UV hours of 10am-3pm. Do NOT use tanning beds or sun lamps. Teach your children proper sun safety since they tend to burn more easily. Thoroughly examine your skin once a month at home and yearly at a Dermatologists office.

Unusual moles, sores, lumps, blemishes, markings or changes in the way the skin looks or feels may be a sign of melanoma or other skin cancer and should be checked by your Doctor right away. The most important sign of melanoma is a new spot on the skin or a spot that is changing in size, shape or color. Moles often begin to appear in children and young adults. Most moles will never cause any problems, but a person with a lot of moles is more likely to develop melanoma. A mole can become malignant (cancerous) often years after the skin has been burnt. Using the ABCDE rule guide can help you determine whether or not a mole is abnormal.



## ABCDE Rule for Skin Cancer

- 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 and may include different shades of brown or black, or sometimes with patches of pink, red, white or blue
- D** Is for Diameter– the spot is larger than 6mm across (about 1/4 of an inch or the size of a pencil eraser) although melanomas can be smaller than this
- E** Is for Evolving– the mole is changing in size, shape or color

Some skin cancers and melanomas don’t fit these rules. It is important to tell your Doctor about any changes or new growths on the skin, or growths that look different from the rest of your moles.

**For more information on skin cancer prevention, products or procedures, please call the Plastic Surgery Department at**

**815-398-3277**