



"Treatment without prevention is simply unsustainable." - Bill gates

As the month of May brings skin cancer into focus, it is time to increase public understanding of the disease, including its prevalence, approaches to screening and prevention, treatment options, and resources that offer updated skin cancer information throughout the year. Early detection is the key.

Melanoma

Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer. It is the leading cause of death from skin disease.

The exact cause of all melanomas is not clear, but exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from sunlight or tanning lamps and beds increases the risk of developing melanoma. Limiting the exposure to UV radiation can help reduce the risk of melanoma.

The risk of melanoma seems to be increasing in people under 40, especially women.

Causes:

You are more likely to develop melanoma if you:

- ✚ Have fair skin, blue or green eyes, or red or blonde hair.
- ✚ Live in sunny climates or at high altitudes.
- ✚ Spend a lot of time in high levels of strong sunlight because of job or other activities.
- ✚ Have had one or more blistering sunburns during childhood.
- ✚ Use tanning devices or chemicals.

Other risk factors include:

- ✚ Close relatives with melanoma.
- ✚ Certain types of moles (atypical or dysplastic) or many birthmarks.
- ✚ Weakened immune system due to disease or medication.

Symptoms:

The first melanoma signs and symptoms usually are:

- ✚ A change in an existing mole.
- ✚ The development of a new pigmented or unusual looking growth on skin.

To help you identify characteristics of unusual moles that may indicate melanomas or other skin cancers, think of the letters ABCDE:

- ✚ **A** is for Asymmetrical shape. Look for moles with irregular shapes, such as two very different-looking halves.
- ✚ **B** is for Border irregularity. Look for moles with irregular, notched, ragged or blurred borders — characteristics of melanomas.
- ✚ **C** is for Color changes. Look for growths that have many colors or an uneven distribution of color.
- ✚ **D** is for Diameter. The size of mole is greater than 1/4 inch (about 6 millimeters). Any growth of mole should be evaluated.
- ✚ **E** is for Evolution. There is a change in the size, shape, symptoms (itching or tenderness), surface (bleeding), or color of a mole.

Other suspicious changes in a mole may include:

- ✚ Itching.
- ✚ Oozing or bleeding.

When to Contact a Medical Professional?

Call the health care provider if you notice a new growth or any other changes in your skin. You should also call if an existing spot becomes painful, swollen, or inflamed, or if it starts to bleed or itch.

Prevention:

Some people should see a dermatologist for regular skin examinations. These include people with:

- ✚ Family history of melanoma.
- ✚ Severely sun-damaged skin.
- ✚ Lots of moles on their skin.

Many cases of skin cancer or melanoma can be prevented by following these precautions:

- ✚ Avoid the sun during the middle of the day.
- ✚ Wear protective clothing.
- ✚ Avoid tanning beds.
- ✚ Become familiar with your skin so you can notice changes, if any.
- ✚ Encourage families to adopt good habits together, like wearing sunscreen and limiting their time in the sun.
- ✚ Motivate teachers and administrators to teach children about the harm of UV radiation and why it is important to protect yourself.
- ✚ Identify youth leaders in the community who can talk to their peers about taking steps to prevent skin cancer.
- ✚ Partner with a local hospital, state fair or similar organization to host a skin cancer screening event.

Reference Links:

- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/melanoma/basics/prevention/con-20026009>
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001853/>
- <http://news.cancerconnect.com/may-is-national-skin-cancer-awareness-month-3/>
- <http://www.aad.org/spot-skin-cancer/what-we-do/melanoma-monday>
- <http://healthfinder.gov/NHO/MayToolkit2.aspx>

For any enquiry or assistance please contact: wellness@medicaretpa.co.in

Disclaimer: No information contained here should be relied on in making health decisions. Always check with your doctor or other health care provider.