

For further information

Please phone the dermatology specialist nurse on 020 7288 5062
mobile 07827 662 065
pager 07699 705 445

(Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Itching, bleeding and weeping

You may get all these symptoms in benign (harmless) moles but if they suddenly develop and carry on, you should see your GP. Any of the above changes may happen in benign moles, but they are signs that you should check them with your GP.

Other questions about moles

If I shave over a mole will it turn malignant? There is no evidence that irritation from shaving will harm moles.

Is it dangerous to remove hairs from a mole? No, you can clip hairs close to the skin's surface or get them removed by a dermatologist without causing harm to the mole.

Is it unusual for moles to darken during pregnancy?

No, many women find their moles darken during pregnancy. If you are worried though, it is always worth checking with your GP. If you are in any doubt about a mole, see your GP.

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Moles

A patient's guide

.... caring for you 

About moles

Nearly everyone has at least one dark coloured spot or mole on their skin. Most ordinary moles develop after birth, but some people are born with moles or birthmarks. Most of these are harmless and stay harmless throughout life. The skin cancer which arises in a mole, is called 'malignant melanoma'. The chance of any one mole becoming malignant is extremely small.

Facts about malignant melanoma

- It is extremely rare for a mole to become malignant before a person reaches puberty.
- Malignant melanoma is a serious form of cancer and can kill. However, if it is treated early enough, by being cut out it is completely curable.
- Although we do not know the cause of malignant melanoma, we know that ultraviolet light can trigger off malignant changes. You must try to avoid burning your skin in the sun.
- You are more at risk of malignant melanoma if you have a close relative who has had one. So, find out about anyone in your family who has had a mole removed.

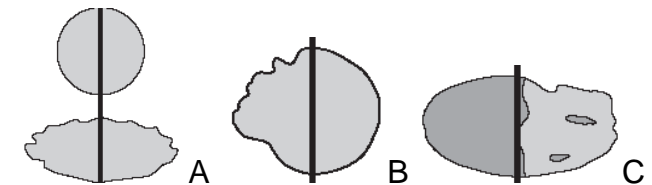
- You are also at risk if you burn easily in the sun, especially if you have red hair and blue eyes.
- You are more at risk of malignant melanoma if you have more than 100 moles on your body. Most people normally have 20 to 40.
- You should closely monitor your moles on parts of the body, which do not see much sunlight, (your bottom for example).
- Take care of your children's skin, as burning in the sun in early childhood may increase the risk of developing malignant melanoma in later life.
- Always use factor 15 suncream (minimum) when you are outdoors in bright sunshine or bright cloudy days. Reapply it every two hours and always after swimming.
- Keep out of the sun and find some shade between 11am and 3pm.
- Never burn.

Danger signs in a mole. How do you know if one of your moles is malignant?
Report to your GP if any one of the following happens.

Your moles get bigger over a period of time. Measure your mole and make a note of its size. Do it again in 12 weeks and see if there is a difference. If there is, tell your GP immediately. Most moles will get bigger as a child grows. This is normal and harmless.

Change in shape or outline. Most innocent moles are regular in outline and round or oval. Try this test, if you draw a line from the top of the mole to the bottom, through its centre, the two halves should look identical. See diagram A

If one half does not match the other half, report this to your GP. See diagram B.



Change in colour. A change in colour from brown to blue-black is the commonest colour change if a mole is becoming a melanoma. You need to see your GP if you have irregular shades of colour within a mole such as brown, blue, red, black and pink. See diagram C