

MOLES AND OTHER PIGMENTED LESIONS

The average person has 25 moles, some up to 100, but most cause no problem. They normally grow larger and darker around adolescence, and then gradually become more raised, less dark and may develop hairs over time.

Some people with moles are more at risk of developing a skin cancer known as a melanoma. Severe sunburns in younger years increases that risk. Also people with over 100 moles, those that are born with moles (congenital nevi), and a family history of melanoma also are at risk. Others may have atypical or dysplastic moles that are larger in size, have irregular shape, uneven color and irregular borders. These types of moles often run in families and have a higher incidence of melanoma.

The danger signs of melanoma are ABCD:

Asymmetry. One side of the mole doesn't match the other.

Border. The edges are irregular or blurred.

Color. The color is not uniform, and has shades of brown, black or blue.

Diameter. Larger than the size of a pencil eraser.

Ordinary raised moles may be safely removed by a shave excision. There is usually no need for an excision with sutures. When the mole is shaved off the skin there is little or no scarring.

Atypical, dysplastic nevi, or pigmented lesions that are suspicious for melanoma may need a deeper excision with a suture closure. There are other benign pigmented lesions such as seborrheic keratoses, lentigines and freckles. These can easily be diagnosed by a dermatologist and treated if desired.