

Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary Template

Title: Learning your ABCDE's: When To Worry About a Mole

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Plain Language Summary:

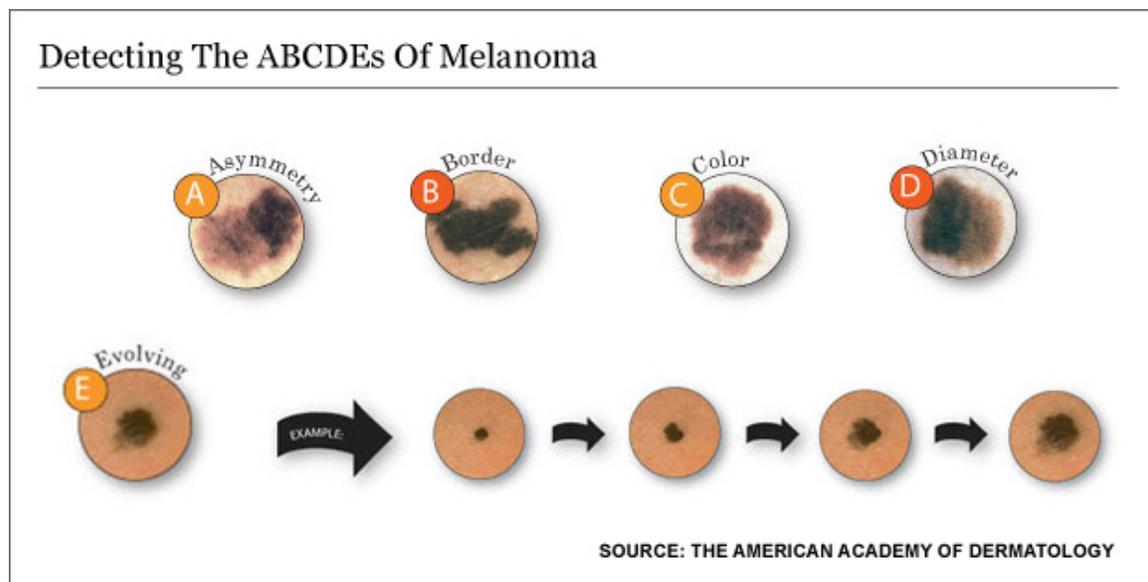
Skin cancer is becoming more and more common, and it is important that you know how to spot dangerous marks on your skin. Melanoma is one type of skin cancer that looks like a dark spot or a mole on your body. By doing a self-exam of your skin every month, you can improve your chances of finding this cancer early. On top of looking at your own skin, you should have your doctor look at your skin during visits too.

Melanoma can happen anywhere on the body, but it likes some spots more on different people. Women need to look closely at their arms and legs. Men tend to get more on their head, neck, and trunk. Dark skinned people should pay special attention to their palms, soles, and nails. The bottom line is this: check all of your skin, but pay special attention to your area of risk.

What should you be looking for? Melanoma almost always has one of the following features, easy to remember as your "A-B-C-D-E's":

- A** = Asymmetry: one half does not look like the other half
- B** = Border: the edge is uneven
- C** = Color: there is more than one color in the spot
- D** = Diameter: it is larger than the eraser end of a pencil
- E** = Enlarging: it has been growing bigger

For more help in what to look for, check out the picture below showing skin spots that have features of the A-B-C-D-E's. If you find any spot on your skin that has any of the A-B-C-D-E's, it is important to call your doctor immediately and let them know.



Additional Resources:

American Association of Dermatology: "How to examine your skin":

-this website has pictures showing you how to look at your skin and what to look for, and also has links to find free skin cancer screenings in your city

<http://www.aad.org/skin-conditions/skin-cancer-detection/about-skin-self-exams>

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/melanoma/DS00439>

The Skin Cancer Foundation

<http://www.skincancer.org/Melanoma/>

National Cancer Institute

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/melanoma>

PubMed Health

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001853/>

Key Words:

Melanoma

Mole

Skin

Dermatology

Cancer Screening

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.