



MELANOMA

Melanoma is the most serious cancer of the skin and its incidence is increasing, possibly due to the reduction of the ozone layer, allowing more sun exposure. Melanoma is a curable malignancy, when discovered early enough. Unfortunately, many patients still die from this skin cancer - even young people, because they do not heed the warning signs.

Some people are at higher risk than others for developing melanoma. These individuals have fair skin and were heavily exposed to the sun, especially during infancy or adolescence. Also, patients with many pigmented lesions (melanocytic nevi), in particular large and irregular dark lesions (melanocytic dysplastic nevi) are at a higher risk. Additional factors include having one or more family members with melanoma and a personal history of melanoma.

Areas of higher risk for both sun exposed and sun protected areas include:

- Back - more common in white men
- Legs - more common in white women
- Soles - more common in black women and men

Melanoma arises more frequently in normal skin. It differs from other pigmented lesions by being a dark dot that may have:

- Rapid growth
- Color changes
- Itching
- Bleeding

Changes that may be signs of alarm include:

- Color alterations
- Darkening
- Change from the original color
- Multiple colors
- Size alteration
 - Increased size
 - Reduced size
 - New elevation
- Peri-lesional alterations
- Redness

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