

[IMAGE]

The Skin Alphabet: Recognize the Signs of Skin Cancer

By Editorial Staff

Nothing says summer more than bright sunshine. For many people, the extended hours of sunlight mean more time to spend outdoors. Getting a few minutes of sunshine every day is also part of maintaining good health. A moderate amount of sun provides a good amount of vitamin D, the essential vitamin linked to decreasing the risk of many forms of cancer, heart disease and other conditions.

However, it is important to recognize that being out in the sun for too long without adequate sunscreen or other protection can lead to risky exposure, which can increase your risk of developing skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, with more than 3.5 million skin cancers in over 2 million people diagnosed annually, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.

In order to reduce your risk of getting skin cancer, it is essential to use sunscreen while outdoors and not overexpose by burning your skin. It is also important to keep a close watch on suspect moles that may surface.

skin cancer - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark If you do spot a mole, keep an eye on it; check it regularly and know the danger/warning signs – the skin alphabet – that necessitate a trip to your doctor for further evaluation.

A is for Asymmetry

Normal moles are completely symmetrical in nature. If you were to draw a line through a normal mole, you would have two symmetrical halves. In cases of skin cancer, moles will not look the same on both sides.

B is for Border

Make sure the moles or spots on your body do not have blurry and/or jagged edges.

C is for Color

A mole that is more than one hue is suspicious and needs to be evaluated by a doctor. Normal spots are usually one color. This can include lightening or darkening of the mole.

D is for Diameter

If you have a mole that is larger than a pencil eraser (about 1/4 inch or 6mm), it needs to be examined by a doctor. This includes moles that do not have any other abnormalities (color, border, asymmetry).

E is for Elevation

Elevation means the mole is raised above the surface and has an uneven surface. If you see this, make sure to schedule an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible.

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