



What is Melanoma?

Melanoma is a very dangerous skin cancer that claims the life of one American EVERY HOUR. Each year about 178,000 Americans are diagnosed with this deadly skin cancer.

What is Melanoma so dangerous?

Melanoma is deadly because it can travel from your skin to other organs if left untreated. It can metastasize (spread) to your lymph nodes, lungs, liver, and brain. Once it spreads, melanoma can become very deadly and has limited treatment options, making it incredibly difficult to treat.

Am I at risk?

Melanoma is largely caused by exposure to ultraviolet light and sunburns, although it does also have a genetic component. Light-skinned individuals with blond or red hair and freckling are more susceptible. Additionally, people with many nevi (moles) are more likely to develop melanoma. Tanning beds and sun-exposure are the leading causes of melanoma, especially if the exposure occurred before age 35. Sunburns, especially blistering sunburns, are very harmful and greatly increase the cancer risk. For example, every blistering sunburn that occurs at a young age doubles the risk of melanoma. Young people who use tanning beds are eight times more likely to develop melanoma.

How can I avoid getting Melanoma?

You must avoid tanning beds, extensive sun exposure, and sunburns. The belief that a tan prevents sunburns is incorrect; there is no safe tan. Make sure to protect children from the sun because early sun damage gives them a higher risk of cancer, even as adults. Please make sure to avoid the midday sun (10 AM - 2 PM), wear sun protective clothing, and apply sunscreen with an SPF 30 or higher. I recommend applying sunscreen on a

daily basis, especially on areas that are most affected by the sun (i.e. your nose, ears, face, neck, and hands). If you are going to spend an extended period of time outdoors, then I recommend an SPF 50 or higher. Most people forget to reapply, which leads to sunburns despite their earlier efforts. Sunscreen should be re-applied every 2 hours, unless you are exposed to high amounts of water or sweat (swimming or heavy activity). In that case, re-apply every hour if possible.

How can I get checked to make sure I am Melanoma free?

People with suspicious lesions, a family or personal history of melanoma, numerous moles, or a high sun exposure should have an annual full skin examination performed by their dermatologist. I have seen many skin cancers and melanomas go undiagnosed. Patients mistaken the cancer for a benign spot, or may have been previously misdiagnosed. If you are suspicious of any lesion on your skin, we recommend visiting a dermatologist for confirmation. We offer genomic testing to assess your risk of melanoma.

I was diagnosed with a Melanoma, now what?

The diagnosis of melanoma can be devastating. Once diagnosed, I will go over your diagnosis with you in detail and the treatment options. Not all melanomas are treated the same. The treatment plan depends on the type of melanoma and how deep it has invaded. For deeper melanomas, we may refer you to another surgeon for a special type of lymph node biopsy (sentinel lymph node biopsy). During this biopsy, the surgeon will remove the closest lymph node to the cancer to assess if the cancer has spread.

Early melanomas can be treated surgically with good cure rates. However, more advanced melanomas do not respond as well, and treatment may be difficult. For this reason, the best cure is early detection!