

Checking for Skin Cancer

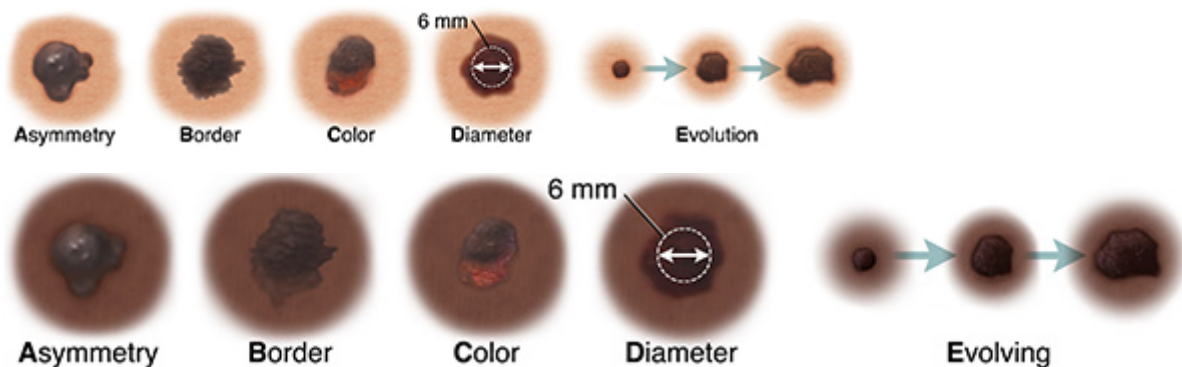


You can help find cancer early by checking your skin each month. There are 3 main kinds of skin cancer: melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma. Doing monthly skin checks is the best way to find new marks, sores, or skin changes. Follow these instructions for checking your skin.

The ABCDEs of checking moles for melanoma

Check your moles or growths for signs of melanoma using ABCDE:

- **Asymmetry:** The sides of the mole or growth don't match.
- **Border:** The edges are ragged, notched, or blurred.
- **Color:** The color within the mole or growth varies. It could be black, brown, tan, white, or shades of red, gray, or blue.
- **Diameter:** The mole or growth is larger than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or 6 mm (size of a pencil eraser).
- **Evolving:** The size, shape, texture, or color of the mole or growth is changing.



Checking for other types of skin cancer

Basal cell carcinoma or squamous cell carcinoma cause symptoms like:

- A spot or mole that looks different from all other marks on your skin
- Changes in how an area feels, such as itching, tenderness, or pain
- Changes in the skin's surface, such as oozing, bleeding, or scaliness
- A sore that doesn't heal
- New swelling, redness, or spread of color beyond the border of a mole

Who's at risk?

Anyone of any skin color can get skin cancer. But you're at greater risk if you have:

- Fair skin that freckles easily and burns instead of tanning
- Light-colored or red hair

- Light-colored eyes
- Many moles or abnormal moles on your skin
- A long history of unprotected exposure to sunlight or tanning beds
- A history of many blistering sunburns as a child or teen
- A family history of skin cancer
- Been exposed to radiation or chemicals
- A weakened immune system
- Been exposed to arsenic

If you've had skin cancer in the past, you're at a higher risk of having it again.

How to check your skin

Do your monthly skin checkups in front of a full-length mirror. Use a room with good lighting so it's easier to see. Use a hand mirror to look at hard-to-see places like your buttocks and back. You can also have a trusted friend or family member help you with these checks. Check every part of your body, including your:

- Head (ears, face, neck, and scalp)
- Torso (front, back, sides, and under breasts)
- Arms (tops, undersides, and armpits)
- Hands (palms, backs, and fingers, including under the nails)
- Low back, buttocks, and genitals
- Legs (front, back, and sides)
- Feet (tops, soles, toes, including under the nails, and between toes)

Watch for new spots on your skin or a spot that's changing in color, shape, size.

Make a record of changes in your spots and moles. Record the location, shape, border, color, size, and how it has changed. If you have a lot of moles, take digital photos of them each month. Make sure to take photos both up close and from a distance. These can help you see if any moles change over time.

Know your skin

Most skin changes aren't cancer. But if you see any changes in your skin, call your healthcare provider right away. And make an appointment for a skin exam. Only they can tell you if a skin change is a problem. If you have skin cancer, seeing your provider can be the first step to getting the treatment that could save your life.

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