

A routine skin check could save your life

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(HealthDay)—It may sound dramatic, but skin checks save lives.

While encouraging people to do routine self-exams, the American

Academy of Dermatology (AAD) shares some case studies that led to important discoveries.

Richard Danzer, of West Palm Beach, Fla., found a large, painful cyst on his back during a skin self-exam. Dermatologist Dr. Brittany Smirnov examined him, and he was later diagnosed with [lung cancer](#) and given lifesaving treatment.

When John Ahearn, of Phoenix, had dark bruising that appeared on his legs, dermatologist Dr. Lindsay Ackerman suspected he might have a serious blood issue. She collaborated with a hematology-oncology specialist who diagnosed Ahearn with leukemia. He is now in remission after a bone marrow transplant.

After noticing changes to a mole on her toe, Yvonne Basil, of Plano, Texas, saw her dermatologist and was diagnosed with melanoma from an in-office biopsy. She is now cancer-free.

"Regular self-skin checks are crucial to identify [skin cancer](#) and other [skin diseases](#) early," AAD president Dr. Ken Tomecki said in an academy news release. "We encourage everyone to regularly perform skin self-exams to catch any changes early."

You can do your own skin checks at home, and then follow up with a dermatologist if you spot something concerning. The academy suggests using the initials A, B, C, D, E during your self-exam.

A is for Asymmetry, when one half of a spot is unlike the other. B is for border, when a spot has an irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border, C is for color, when the spots has color variation from one area to the next. D is for diameter. Melanomas are typically larger than 6 millimeters, which is about the size of a pencil eraser. E is for evolving. The spot looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape or

color.

To do a [skin](#) exam, look at your body in a full-length mirror. Look at your underarms, forearms and palms. Look at your legs, between toes and at the soles of your feet. Use a hand mirror to examine your neck and scalp, as well as to check your back and buttocks.

If you notice a spot that is different from others, or that changes, itches or bleeds, you should make an appointment to see a board-certified [dermatologist](#).

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, with roughly 9,500 people diagnosed every day.

More information: The American Cancer Society offers more suggestions for a [skin self-exam](#).

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