

Mayo Clinic Minute: Learning the 'ABCDEs' of melanoma

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Melanoma. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/National Cancer Institute

Melanoma is a type of skin cancer that develops in cells that produce your skin's pigment. Regular skin checks can help you identify the warning signs and differentiate melanoma from noncancerous skin formations, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Moles are a common skin growth, and most are harmless. But changes in moles and other pigmented [patches](#) may be the sign of skin cancer, particularly [melanoma](#).

When it comes to early detection, just remember the ABCDEs.

"A" is for asymmetry.

"You want moles to be perfectly symmetrical, such that you could put a mirror right down the middle of it and the image would look the same," says Dr. Catherine Degesys, a Mayo Clinic dermatologist.

"B" stands for border.

"You want a nice crisp edge to these pigmented lesions and no scalloped edges or indistinct edges," says Dr. Degesys.

"C" is for color.

"In general, you want moles to be a homogenous color and not have multiple different pigmented areas," Dr. Degesys adds.

"D" represents the mole's diameter. Pigmented [lesions](#) being greater than 6 millimeters potentially need further evaluation.

"E" is probably the most important, and that corresponds with evolution, says Dr. Degesys.

"Any pigmented lesion or any moles that are changing are something that really needs to be evaluated by a dermatologist."

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