

Fine, white hairs on your nose? Could indicate cancer, doctor warns

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A recent social media video highlights an unusual but potentially critical cancer indicator that often goes unnoticed—the sudden growth of fine, white hair on typically hairless areas of the body.

Dr. Scott Walter, a board-certified dermatologist, recently highlighted this issue in a TikTok post. This condition is known as acquired hypertrichosis lanuginosa and affects fewer than 1,000 people in the United States, according to the Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center.

Walter explains in the video that lanugo, defined as fine, nonpigmented, wispy hairs similar to those on newborns, can appear on adults' ears, cheeks and nose. When this occurs, it may be paraneoplastic—a disorder caused by the body's response to an internal cancer, often lung, breast, uterus or ovary.

"What's crazy is that this sign can precede the diagnosis of cancer by two and a half years, meaning this could be the first sign that you have cancer," Walter said. "Now, again, this is super rare, and I don't mean to scare you, but I think it's an interesting way of our skin telling us something's going on internally."

Other [symptoms](#) that may accompany HLA include tongue inflammation, altered taste sensation, loss of [hair](#) color, chronic diarrhea and [weight loss](#), the Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center reported.

Early detection remains a key factor in successful [cancer](#) treatment, according to the World Health Organization, and awareness of lesser-known signs like HLA can play a crucial role in this process.

"So if you see something weird going on with your skin, definitely get it checked out," Walter said.

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