

Skin Cancer: What You Need to Know About Prevention, Detection, and Treatment

Skin cancer is something we see often in dermatology, and it is one of the most important reasons to pay attention to changes in your skin. The good news is that skin cancer is often very treatable, especially when it is found early.

Many patients come into our office because they have noticed a spot that looks different, a mole that has changed, or a sore that simply will not heal. Others come in for a routine skin examination because they have a history of skin cancer or simply want to be proactive about their skin health. Whatever brings you in, our goal is the same: to identify concerning areas early, answer your questions, and make sure you are equipped with the knowledge and tools you need to maintain healthy skin.

What Is Skin Cancer?

Skin cancer occurs when abnormal skin cells begin to grow in an uncontrolled way. The three most common types are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma.

Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas are the most common types of skin cancer. They typically develop in areas that receive a lot of sun exposure, such as the face, scalp, ears, neck, arms, and hands. Melanoma is less common but can be more serious because it has greater potential to spread to other parts of the body.

One of the challenges with skin cancer is that it does not always look like what people expect. It may appear as a new growth, a changing mole, a rough or scaly patch, a sore that does not heal, or a spot that bleeds or repeatedly comes back.

Why Skin Checks Matter

One of the biggest advantages of seeing a dermatologist is that we are trained to recognize changes that may be difficult to identify on your own.

During a full-body skin examination, your dermatologist looks carefully at your skin, including areas that you may not routinely check yourself. If a spot looks suspicious, we may recommend a biopsy. A biopsy involves removing a small sample of skin and sending it to a pathologist for examination under a microscope. This is how skin cancer is diagnosed.

Not every unusual-looking spot is skin cancer, and not every mole needs to be removed. That is why an examination by an experienced dermatology professional can be so helpful. How often you need a skin examination depends on your individual risk factors and your history. If you have had skin cancer before, have many moles, have significant sun exposure, or have other risk factors, your dermatologist may recommend more frequent examinations.

What Can You Do to Prevent Skin Cancer?

You cannot control every risk factor for skin cancer, but there are several things you can do that dermatologists recommend to protect your skin.

Those preventative measures include making sun protection part of your daily routine. Wear protective clothing and a wide-brimmed hat and use sunscreen on exposed skin. Remember that sun protection is important not only at the beach or pool, but during everyday activities such as walking, gardening, playing sports, or working outside.

It is also important to become familiar with your own skin. Take a few minutes periodically to look for new or changing spots. If something catches your attention, do not ignore it simply because it does not hurt.

How Calvert Dermatology Helps

At Calvert Dermatology, we understand that hearing the words “skin cancer” can be stressful. Our goal is to make the process as straightforward as possible and to make sure you understand what is happening at every step. Our dermatology team provides comprehensive skin examinations and evaluates new, changing, or concerning growths. When a biopsy is needed, we can help determine the appropriate next step based on the findings.

If skin cancer is diagnosed, treatment depends on the type of cancer, its location, size, and other individual factors. There is no single treatment that is right for every patient. Our Skin Cancer Center offers several treatment options, which are performed by Dr. Faris Hawit, a board-certified dermatologist and Mohs surgeon. These treatments include Mohs Micrographic Surgery, melanoma surgery, local destruction of selected precancerous and superficial skin cancers, Photodynamic Therapy (PDT), and Superficial Radiation Therapy (SRT) for appropriate patients.

Mohs surgery is a specialized technique that allows the surgeon to examine the tissue margins during the procedure, removing cancer while working to preserve as much healthy surrounding tissue as possible. It is particularly useful for certain skin cancers and locations where preserving healthy tissue is important. For some patients, surgery may be the best option. For others, a non-surgical or less invasive treatment may be appropriate. We take the time to discuss the options and create an individualized treatment plan based on your specific diagnosis and needs.

The Bottom Line

Skin cancer is common but finding it early can make a significant difference. Pay attention to your skin, know what is normal for you, protect yourself from excessive sun exposure, and do not wait to have a concerning spot evaluated. If you notice a new or changing mole, a spot that bleeds or does not heal, or simply have a lesion that worries you, we

encourage you to have it checked. You do not have to figure out on your own whether something is skin cancer.

At Calvert Dermatology, our dermatologists and dermatology providers are here to help with everything from routine skin cancer screenings and biopsies to surgical and non-surgical treatment options. Our goal is to provide thorough, personalized care while helping you feel informed and comfortable throughout the process.

Taking care of your skin is not just about how it looks. It is an important part of taking care of your overall health.

Frequently Asked Questions About Skin Cancer

1. What are the warning signs of skin cancer?

Skin cancer may appear as a new or changing mole, a spot that bleeds, a rough patch, or a sore that does not heal. If you notice a change in your skin, have it evaluated by a dermatologist.

2. How often should I get a skin cancer screening?

How often you need a skin examination depends on your personal risk factors, including your history of skin cancer, sun exposure, and number of moles. Your dermatologist can recommend a screening schedule that is appropriate for you.

3. Is skin cancer treatable?

Yes, many skin cancers are highly treatable, especially when detected early. Treatment options may include surgery, Mohs surgery, or other approaches depending on the type, size, and location of the cancer.

References

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