

Moles: Care Instructions

Overview

Moles are skin growths made up of cells that produce color (pigment). A mole can appear anywhere on the skin, alone or in groups. Most people get a few moles during their first 20 years of life. They are usually brown in color but can be blue, black, or flesh-colored. Most moles are harmless and do not cause pain or other symptoms, unless you rub them or they bump against something.

You usually do not need treatment for moles. But some can turn into cancer. Talk to your doctor if a mole bleeds, itches, burns, or changes size or color. Also let your doctor know if you get a new mole. Make sure to wear sunscreen and other sun protection every day to help prevent skin cancer.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Check all the skin on your body regularly for skin growths or other changes, such as in the color and feel of the skin.
 - Stand in front of a full-length mirror. Look carefully at the front and back of your body. Then look at your right and left sides with your arms raised.
 - Bend your elbows and look carefully at your forearms, the back of your upper arms, and your palms.
 - Look at your feet, the bottoms of your feet, and the spaces between your toes.
 - Use a hand mirror to look at the back of your legs, the back of your neck, and your back, rear end (buttocks), and genital area. Part the hair on your head to look at your scalp.
- If you see a change in a skin growth, contact your doctor. Look for:
 - A mole that bleeds.
 - A fast-growing mole.
 - A scaly or crusted growth on the skin.
 - A sore that will not heal.

To prevent skin cancer

- Always wear sunscreen on exposed skin. Make sure to use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Use it every day, even when it is cloudy.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat and long sleeves and pants if you are going to be outdoors for very long.
- Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., which is the peak time for the sun's ultraviolet rays.
- Avoid sunburns, tanning booths, and sunlamps.
- Be sure to protect children from the sun. Sunburns in childhood damage the skin and increase the risk of cancer.

When should you call for help?



Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- A mole looks different than it did before. It may have changed in size, color, shape, or the way it looks.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **M489** in the search box to learn more about **"Moles: Care Instructions"**.

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