



Skin Self Exam

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer, affecting millions of people worldwide each year. Skin cancer can be deadly, but in most cases, when detected early it can be treated successfully. Performing a head to toe skin self examination is an important preventative measure used to identify skin cancer before it becomes life-threatening. A skin self exam only takes about ten minutes to complete and should be performed once a month. Asking a family member or close friend to help you perform your skin exam will help you identify suspicious patches of skin in areas that are hard to reach or see. In addition to monthly self exams, it is recommended that you see your physician once a year for a professional skin exam. This animation will explain how to perform a skin self exam, how to detect possible signs of skin cancer, and how to record your findings to report them to your physician.





MRS ELENA PROUSSHAIA PEREGUDOVA
MD, FRCS (Plast), FEBOPRAS
Consultant Plastic, Reconstructive & Cosmetic Surgeon



Introduction

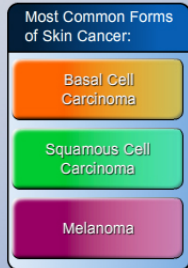
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Doctor's Personal Note: A Message From Your Doctor

Thank you for visiting our website and viewing our 3D Animation Library. These animations should assist you in better understanding your condition or procedure. We look forward to answering any additional questions you may have at our next appointment.



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What Qualifies as a Suspicious Patch of Skin?

The purpose of a skin self exam is to identify any patches of skin that may be indicative of skin cancer. Skin cancer reveals itself in various ways, depending on the form of skin cancer a person has. The three most common forms of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma typically occur on areas of skin that are most often exposed to sunlight, including the face, ears, scalp, neck, arms, hands, and legs. Basal cell carcinoma often emerges as an open sore that will not heal or as a pearly, abnormal growth. Squamous cell carcinoma can appear as a thick, wart-like sore or as a scaly, red patch with irregular borders. Melanoma often surfaces as an irregularly shaped or multi-colored mole on the head, neck, lower legs, or trunk. To view descriptions of abnormal growths that may indicate skin cancer, click on any of the three forms of skin cancer and roll over the corresponding examples. Move your mouse off of a particular example to select another form of skin cancer and view examples.



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MD, FRCS (Plast), FEBOPRAS
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ABCDEs of Melanoma

Asymmetry

Border Irregularity

Color Variation

Diameter

Evolving

Looking for Abnormalities

A practical system used to remember what to look for during your skin self exam, known as the ABCDEs of melanoma, has been created to help you recognize the indicators of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. If you notice an abnormal growth that displays any suspicious characteristics, record your findings and notify your physician. The ABCDEs of melanoma stand for asymmetry, border irregularity, color variation, diameter, and evolving. Each characteristic is described as follows:

Asymmetry - one half of the mole is different from the other half

Border irregularity - the edges of the mole are irregular or poorly defined

Color variation - the mole is multicolored

Diameter - the diameter of the mole is greater than 6mm (about ¼ inch)

Evolving - the mole looks different from your other moles, or it has changed in shape, color, size, or another trait



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MD, FACS (Plast), FEBOPRAS
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The Self Exam

To perform a skin self exam, look for any abnormal growths by first inspecting your hands, including the tops of your hands, your fingernails, your palms, and the skin between your fingers. Next, stand in front of a full length mirror and examine your face and ears. Part your hair to ensure you can clearly see your scalp. Continue by inspecting your neck, chest, and torso; women should check under their breasts as well. Lift your arms to examine your underarms, elbows, and the front and back sides of your arms. Proceed by turning your back toward the full length mirror, and use a small handheld mirror to inspect your neck, shoulders, back, buttocks, and the back side of your legs. To complete the exam, sit in a chair and examine your genitals, the front side of your legs, and your feet, including the tops of your feet, your toenails, heels, soles, and the skin between your toes.

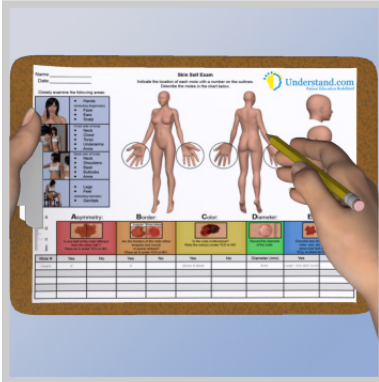


Detection and Prevention

Performing a skin self examination once a month can help you detect skin cancer in its early stages, increasing the chances for it to be treated before it becomes life-threatening. If you notice any suspect moles or abnormal growths, do not hesitate to schedule a professional skin examination with your physician.



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Keeping a Record of your Findings

Taking notes during monthly skin self exams will help you track changes or irregularities in the appearance of your skin. Record the location, size, shape, color and any additional specifics about any moles, abnormal growths, or suspicious patches of skin you detect. Saving these records and bringing them with you during your annual professional skin examination will help you accurately report your findings to your physician.