



Are You at Risk for Melanoma?

After a long, cold winter, most of us welcome the feel of the warm summer sun on our skin. Some of us even spend most of our daylight hours in the sun, enjoying every minute that we can in the great outdoors. But are we putting ourselves at risk by spending too much time in the sun?

Well, sun lovers, take heart. Enjoy the sun, but be aware of the risks – and, take some simple steps to keep yourself (and your children) from being an easy target for melanoma.

That's the advice given by Frank Troha, MD, chief of Plastic Surgery at Miami Valley Hospital. According to Dr. Troha, melanoma, a very serious form of skin cancer, can develop from dysplastic nevi, or noncancerous, but unusual-looking moles. Moles that grow, turn darker, itch, bleed, or change color, can indicate that a cell type is changing.

Dr. Troha suggests that, in addition to taking precautions in the sun, individuals also should

monitor their skin (and that of their children) to watch for changes in the size or appearance of a mole. Most melanomas occur in areas of the body that have sun exposure. However, the most dangerous moles are those that appear on the bottoms of feet, between toes, or on the palms of the hand between the fingers.

"If it looks suspicious, I recommend having these type moles biopsied and removed," says Dr. Troha. "The majority of melanomas have a horizontal growth phase before they deepen, so they usually can be noticed by a family member or physician before penetrating."

To protect yourself against the sun's harmful effects, wear a hat and apply a sunblock that blocks both UVA and UVB rays. "Moderation is the key," says Dr. Troha. "Don't burn." A sunblock with SPF 30 or above is especially appropriate for children, and adults who are fair-skinned and/or blonde. And be sure to reapply sunblock regularly throughout your outdoor exposure – a detail many people overlook.

Dr. Troha also recommends the discriminate use of suntan beds, and only when there is no history of melanoma.

In the event of an unusual mole or reason to suspect melanoma, ask your family physician to recommend a plastic surgeon. Plastic surgeons skilled in soft tissue repair can do biopsies and surgical repairs that will give the best possible results.



Frank Troha, MD

Risk Factors for Melanoma

- Family history of melanoma
- Noncancerous, but unusual-looking moles (Dysplastic Nevi)
- Previous melanoma
- Immunosuppressive therapy
- Many ordinary moles (nevi); more than 50
- Severe, blistering sunburns
- Many freckles
- Fair skin, light eyes

Skin Self-Exam

1	Examine head and face. Use blow dryer to inspect scalp.	
2	In full-length mirror, examine elbows, arms, underarms. Check hands, including nails.	
3	Focus on neck, chest, torso. Women: check under breasts.	
4	With back to mirror, use hand mirror to inspect back of neck, shoulders, upper arms, back, buttocks, legs.	
5	Sitting down, check legs and feet, including soles, heels, and nails. Use hand mirror to examine genitals.	