

WELLNESS

How to Know Whether That Mole Might Be Cancer

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For the past decade Glamour has marked Skin Cancer Awareness Month by publishing a guide to checking your own moles in our May issue. This year we're switching things up by going digital—so you can access these images anywhere, at any time, whenever a curious spot shows up. Because taking a careful look at your skin should not be a once yearly affair. "The earlier you can catch skin cancer, the easier it is to cure," says Casey Gallagher, M.D., a dermatologist in Boulder, Colorado. And that means time is pretty much always of the essence.

Melanoma is the second most common cancer in women ages 15 to 29, and more than a million Americans are living with it right now, according to [Jody Levine, M.D.](#), director of dermatology at [Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC](#), citing the American Academy of Dermatology. "About half of melanomas found are self-detected," she says. That means give yourself a good once-over, and compare any moles you have to the ones in these images.

As you look at the pictures below, [Dr. Levine](#) says to keep the ABCDEs of melanoma in mind (Asymmetry, when one half doesn't match the other; Border irregularity, when the edges are jagged; Color that varies; Diameter that's larger than a pencil eraser; or a mole that is Evolving—changing shape, size, or color over time). And if something fits the bill, get to your derm ASAP for a check.

01



Normal Mole

Healthy moles are often uniform in color with smooth borders. Still, any bump that changes should be checked.

02



Atypical Mole

The irregular border and haphazard coloring are red flags. This mole needs to be watched closely.

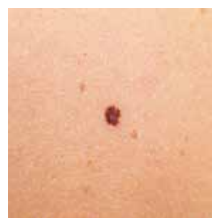
03



Atypical Mole

Not cancerous—but of concern. Having abnormal moles can increase your risk for skin cancer.

04



Dysplastic Nevus

Also known as an "atypical mole." This tends to be dark with irregular borders. It could become cancerous, so your derm will remove it or keep a close eye on it.

05



Basal Cell Carcinoma

The most common type of skin cancer, BCC forms deep in the skin and looks like a raised pink growth or a sore that won't heal. BCC may also look pearly or translucent, in colors like pink, red, or white.

06



Basal Cell Carcinoma

These cancers can also look crusty or like an open sore.

07



Squamous Cell Carcinoma

These often look like warts or thick, scaly patches and can be deadly if left untreated.

08



Squamous Cell Carcinoma

Look for a reddish patch or wartlike bump that may crust or bleed. Get it checked out pronto—left untreated, it may spread.

09



Melanoma

The most deadly of skin cancers, melanomas may look geometrical in form and be smooth or raised.

10



Melanoma

These cancers may also have irregular borders. They can be black, brown, gray, white, or even red.

11



Melanoma

This dangerous cancer has a funky shape with blurred borders and tends to be dark brown or black in color, but it can also be multicolor.

12



Acral Lentiginous Melanoma

Usually it appears as a brown or black mark under nails, or on the palms or soles of the feet.

13



Actinic Keratosis

This potentially cancerous spot usually occurs on sun-exposed areas (scalp, lips, hands) and tends to look like a raised, rough, or scaly patch.