

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer. It is a cancer of melanocytes, which are cells that produce melanin, the pigment that is primarily responsible for giving skin its colour. Melanoma can occur anywhere on the skin and commonly develops in an existing or new mole.



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Types

Classification is based on colour, shape, location and how they grow. The types of melanoma are: superficial spreading melanoma, nodular melanoma, lentigo maligna melanoma, acral lentiginous, desmoplastic melanoma, subungual melanoma, mucosal melanoma and uveal melanoma.
Stages: Stage 0, Stage I, Stage II, Stage III, Stage IV

Causes

Exposure of Ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun or tanning beds is considered to be the leading cause of melanoma.
Other risk factors for melanoma include; sunburns, personal and family history of melanoma, fair skin and light hair, more than 50 moles, dysplastic nevus, age, medications and immune suppression, and atypical moles (dysplastic nevi).

Impact on the Patient's Quality of Life

Every treatment has side effects, or unwanted physical or emotional symptoms such as fatigue, pain, depression, and anxiety. Everyone reacts differently; some people experience fewer or milder side effects.

The survival rate for melanoma is high if it is detected early and unlike many cancers, melanoma is often clearly visible on the skin.

In Canada, melanoma is one of the top 7 most frequently occurring cancers and incidence rates have more than tripled in the last 30 years and are on the rise.

It takes only one blistering sunburn to double a person's chances of developing melanoma
Melanoma is one of the most common types of cancer for youth between the ages of 15-29.

Treatment and Care of Condition

The main factors affecting treatment options are based on depth of tumour, presence of ulceration and/or lymph node involvement.

Treatment for melanoma can include the following:

- Surgery
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation
- Immunotherapy
- Targeted therapy