



RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF MELANOMA

Toolbox Talks for the members of Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities

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Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer in the US because it is more likely than other skin cancers to spread to the lymph nodes or other parts of the body. Melanocytes are the cells that can become melanoma. They make a brown pigment called melanin, which gives the skin its tan or brown color. Melanin protects the deeper layers of the skin from some of the harmful effects of the sun. For most people, when skin is exposed to the sun, melanocytes make more of the pigment, causing the skin to tan or darken. Nearly 90% of melanomas are thought to be caused by exposure to UV light and sunlight.

Melanoma skin cancer signs include new spots on the skin, or a change in size, shape or color of an existing mole. The ABCD rule is another way to recognize abnormal growths:

- **A is for Asymmetry:** A mole that has an irregular shape, or two different looking halves.
- **B is for Border:** Irregular, blurred, rough or notched edges may be signs of skin cancer.
- **C is for Color:** Most moles are an even color – brown, black, tan or even pink – but changes in the shade or distribution of color throughout the mole can signal melanoma.
- **D is for Diameter:** Moles larger than ¼ inch (6 mm, the size of a pencil eraser) across may be suspect, although some melanomas may be smaller than this.



- **Check your moles regularly.** Other signs of melanoma in a mole include pigment, redness or swelling that spreads outside the border of a spot to the surrounding skin, itchiness, tenderness or pain, changes in texture or scales, oozing or bleeding from an existing mole.

Prevent UV exposure even on cloudy days. Cover up with clothing & plenty of sunscreen!