

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Melanoma**

Melanoma is a common form of skin cancer that can easily go unnoticed. Over the past few years, the incidence of melanoma has risen in all socioeconomic groups. If recognized in its earlier stages, melanoma can be easily eradicated. In order to identify the possible cancer, patients should familiarize themselves with its ABCDEs. The ABCDEs will assist in differentiating ordinary moles from those that could potentially be melanomas. Patients should consult their physician or dermatologist if suspicious of a particular lesion. In addition to routine self-examination, patients should also discuss the effects of sun exposure and appropriate sunscreen selection with their pharmacist. Prevention of sunburns is extremely important in minimizing the risk for developing melanoma. The risk for melanoma increases with each blistering sunburn. Pharmacists can recommend OTC products and educate on sunburn prevention before patients spend time in the sun.

Recognizing melanoma in its early stages is vital to procure a curable treatment option. Familiarizing one's self with the ABCDEs will provide a means of doing so.

- Asymmetry: If you were to divide the mole in half, the two halves would not match.
- Border: The edges of a melanoma are typically uneven.
- Color: A melanoma may display a variety of colors.
- Diameter: Melanomas are typically larger than ¼ inch.
- Evolving: Any alteration in color, shape, or size may implicate melanoma.

There are seven different risk factors for malignant melanoma: blonde hair, three or more blistering sunburns in youth, three or more summers working outdoors in youth, many freckles

on the back, actinic keratosis on the face, a family history of malignant melanoma, and the presence of more than 50 moles. Patients with any of these traits should approach sun exposure with excessive caution. There are several simple steps that can be taken to limit sun exposure. Patients are recommended to wear wide-brimmed hats, cover up as much skin as possible, and to use a sunscreen containing at least SPF 15 whenever outdoors.

It's also important to discuss the effects of sun exposure on your medication regimen with your pharmacist. Pharmacists are in a unique position to counsel on the detrimental effects sun exposure can have in unison with particular medications. Patients taking photosensitizing agents must be even more thorough with SPF application to avoid skin inflammation. Some common photosensitizing drugs include: antibiotics, oral contraceptives, oral hypoglycemic agents, antihistamines, and antihypertensive agents. Regular discussion of medication regimens with a pharmacist will allow for appropriate measures of sun exposure precaution. Pharmacists also serve as an excellent outlet to help patients select the appropriate sunscreen for their skin tone. Patients should take all necessary measures to avoid excessive sun exposure. Additionally, monthly self-examinations should be conducted to scan for any suspicious skin lesions.

Resources:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/Healthday/story?id=6607121&page=1-.Uc4hdxZJA21>

<http://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/melanoma/melanoma-warning-signs-and-images/do-you-know-your-abcdes-panel1-5>

<http://rtips.cancer.gov/rtips/viewProduct.do?viewMode=product&productId=282441>

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**The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at [www.louisianapharmacists.com](http://www.louisianapharmacists.com).**

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