



Sun and skin cancer

The sun is good for us but it is not always good for us



Sun is good for us. Not only does it lift our mood, but it helps us synthesize vitamin-D, which is so important for our bones. But sun is not only benefits. As with everything, it is the amount that determines its beneficial action. In excessive doses, sun may cause skin cancer, including the dreaded malignant melanoma or black skin cancer that develops from a mole.



Protection

For an optimal protection, limiting UV exposure to avoid sunburn as much as possible is essential. And it is key to settle this habit from childhood because our skin has a sun capital that does not regenerate. The level of your sun capital depends on your skin tone. A darker skin will have a greater sun capital than a lighter skin, which means that throughout a lifetime it may be exposed to UV rays for much longer without being damaged. It is therefore important to protect your children: sunscreens, T-shirt, hat, sunshade and sunglasses because melanoma can also develop on the back of the eye. Also remember to protect children wading in the water all day because water only partially protects against UV rays.

The lighter your skin is and the more likely you are to get sunburned and and increase the risk to develop a malignant melanoma.

Prevention

A mole inventory done once a year, preferably by your general practitioner or a dermatologist, is recommended. There are several criteria of malignancy to which you should pay attention.

They can easily be summarized as the « **melanoma alphabet** » :

- **A** as in **A**symmetry
- **B** as in **B**order
- **C** as in **C**olor
- **D** as in **D**iameter
- **E** as in **E**volution

Asymmetry

As a rule, a mole or nevus is round or oval and perfectly symmetrical. If one side starts to spread more than the other, you should be careful.

Border

The border of a healthy nevus is regular and well defined. In case of degeneration, this border may become faded and irregular.

Color

The color should be even. If light patches alternate with darker ones, consult your doctor.

Diameter

Increased size is a warning sign.

Évolution

Any change in appearance or consistency of a nevus should be taken seriously.

	Nevus	Melanoma	
A, as in..			Asymmetry
Round, symmetrical			Asymmetrical
B, as in..			Border
Regular			Irregular
C, as in..			Color
Homogenous			Polychrome
D, as in..			Diameter
Small < 6 mm			Large > 6 mm