



## Want to know more about Melanoma?

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Summer may be over, but this is the perfect time of year to think about skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer. It affects over 1 million Americans each year. Of these, nearly 60,000 will be diagnosed with Melanoma – the most serious and deadly form of skin cancer. With the sunny climate and outdoor lifestyle here in Lincoln County – hunting, outdoor sports and farming – we need to be especially vigilant to catch skin cancer early, or prevent it altogether.

There are two types of skin cancer -- non-melanoma and melanoma. Non-melanoma develops from non-pigmented skin cells. These rarely spread to other body systems such as bones or organs and less likely to be fatal. Still, non-melanoma needs treatment and should not be ignored.

Melanoma, however is a much different story. It forms in pigmented skin cells, often in or near an existing mole or dark spot on the skin. Diagnosed early, it is highly curable, but it can spread rapidly to other body systems such as bones, organs and the nervous system. If melanoma cells spread, it is harder to treat and the survival rate drops significantly.

So what does skin cancer look like?

It often begins in or near a dark spot or mole on the skin. That is why it is important to know the color, size and location of moles on your body. If there are changes, or a new mole pops up suddenly, you need to see a doctor. Here are the ABC's of skin cancer...

- **A**symmetry – one half of the spot does not match the other half.
- **B**order irregularity – normal moles are round or oval. The borders of a melanoma may be uneven, notched or blurry, as if the pigment is spreading from the border into surrounding skin.
- **C**olor – common moles are usually one color. Melanoma may have several colors (black, white, brown or red) or an irregular pattern of colors.
- **D**iameter – common moles are generally less than ¼ inch in diameter – the size of a pencil eraser. Melanomas may be smaller than ¼ inch, but are often larger.

Although these are the most common signs, you can also look for sores that don't heal, moles that ooze, bleed or become bumpy, or pain or itching in a mole.

So how do you find skin cancer? You look for it.

Strip down and check your skin. Write down the location, color and size of all moles you can see. Use a mirror, or have your spouse help you with hard to see areas. Take special care to look at the ears, neck, face, head (search through the hair) and arms. These are very typical areas for skin cancer to develop especially on farmers, pilots and people who work and play outdoors.

If you are unsure about what you're looking for, or have difficulty checking hard to see areas, make an appointment with your healthcare provider. Call any of the three clinics for a skin cancer check. It very well could save your life.

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