

MELANOMA FACT SHEET

About Melanoma in Canada

Melanoma is a deadly form of skin cancer. In 2017, 7,200 Canadians were diagnosed with melanoma and 1,250 succumbed to the disease.¹ Skin cancers are the most commonly diagnosed form of cancer in Canada, despite being largely preventable. The preventability and high mortality rate of melanoma mean that fighting this disease requires a twofold approach: continual education and awareness initiatives, and increased equal and timely access to innovative treatments for patients who are diagnosed.

Prevention plays an essential role

Melanoma is clearly visible on the skin, and the greatest risk factor for melanoma is exposure to UV light. The most common sources of UV radiation on the skin are the sun and artificial tanning beds.

Early detection increases survival

Moles, spots and certain growths on the skin are often harmless, but not always. That is why it is important to examine the skin all over your body once a month, and have a physician check your skin once a year.

Look for the following "ABCDE" warning signs:

- Asymmetry: Do the two halves not match if you imagine drawing a line through the mole?
- Borders: Are the edges uneven, scalloped or notched?
- Colours: Is there a variety of shades (brown, red, white, blue or black)?
- Diameter greater than 6mm: Is the mole the size of a pencil eraser or larger?
- Evolution: Has there been a change in size, shape, colour, or height? Has a new symptom developed (such as bleeding, itching or crusting)?

If you detect any of these warning signs, see a physician promptly. It is particularly important for you to select a physician who specializes in skin cancer and is trained to recognize a melanoma at its earliest stage.

Treatment Innovations for Melanoma

Over the last decade, several forms of innovative treatments for melanoma including immunological therapies, biotherapies, and targeted therapies have been developed, and clinical trials have often demonstrated that these therapies can provide better patient outcomes than standard cancer therapies in terms of both survival rates and quality of life. However, these treatments are often kept from patients who need them in due to budgetary restrictions and lengthy approval times. It is therefore imperative that all stakeholders in the medical system work to address these barriers to patient access, in order to get lifesaving drugs in to the hands of patients who urgently need them.

If you have additional questions, please refer to our website www.saveyourskin.ca or email kathy@saveyourskin.ca.

¹ All statistics supplied by the Canadian Cancer Society, including *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2017: Special Topic: Pancreatic Cancer* (2017) pp. 38 and 62.