

# The ABCD'S of Melanoma and Skin Self-Exam

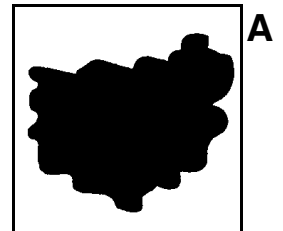


Melanoma is one type of skin cancer. By doing a simple monthly skin self-exam every month, you can improve your chances of finding a melanoma early. In addition to doing routine skin self-exams, people should have their skin checked regularly by a doctor or nurse specialist. A doctor can do a skin exam during visits for regular checkups.

Melanoma can occur anywhere on the body. It occurs most frequently on the arms and legs of women. Rarely, it can occur in the vaginal and cervix area. A women's yearly OB/GYN exam should include checking for changes or new moles in the vaginal and cervix areas. Men tend to get more melanomas on their chest, back, abdomen, head, or neck. The palms of the hands, the soles of the feet and the nailbeds are common sites of melanoma for dark skinned people. Check all of your skin carefully, especially your area of risk.

**During monthly skin self-exam look for the following ABCD'S of melanoma.**

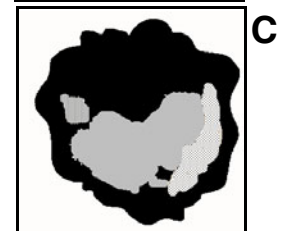
A. **Asymmetry:** One half of the area does not match the other half



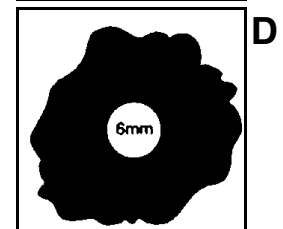
B. **Border:** The edges are uneven or ragged



C. **Color:** The color is uneven with more than one shade or color present



D. **Diameter:** Any change in size, or if the size is larger than a pencil eraser



S. **Sensation:** There are changes in the way it feels (itching, dryness, scaling, lumpy, swollen, tender)

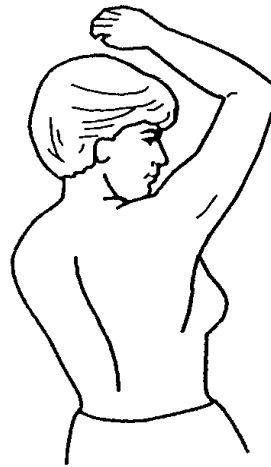
## How to check your skin

After a bath or shower, stand in front of a full-length mirror in a well-lighted room. Use a hand-held mirror to look at hard-to-see areas.

1. Begin with the face and scalp and work downward. Look at the front and back of your body in the mirror, then raise your arms and check your right and left sides.



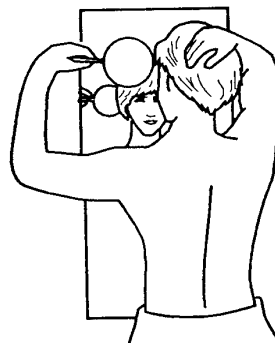
2. Look carefully with elbows bent at your forearms, underarms, fingernails and palms of your hands.



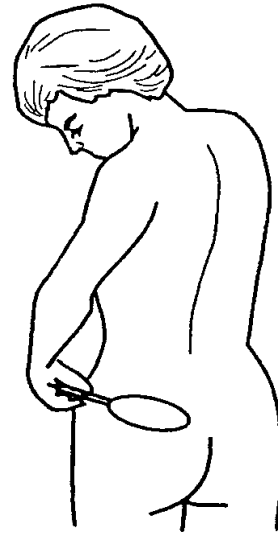
3. Check the backs of your legs and feet, toenails, soles of your feet, and between your toes.



4. Next, with the help of a mirror look at the back of your neck and scalp. Carefully check your scalp by parting your hair.



5. Finally, use a hand mirror and check your back, groin, and buttocks.



By checking your skin regularly, you will become familiar with what is normal for you. It may be helpful to record the dates of your skin exams and to write notes about the way your skin looks. If you find anything unusual, see your doctor right away.

**If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**

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