

## MELANOMA

### **What is it?**

Melanoma is a skin cancer that originates from melanocyte cells which produce pigment (brown or black color). **Melanoma is life threatening if it spreads beyond the skin (metastasize).**

### **Who gets it and what causes it?**

Melanoma occurs in individuals with: 1) a history of a lot of sun exposure including sunburns, 2) fair skin, light hair, and blue eyes, 3) many moles and freckles, and 4) a family history of melanoma. Excessive sunlight is the primary cause of melanoma.

### **What are the symptoms?**

The first visible sign of melanoma is usually a change in the appearance of an existing mole. The mole may become: 1) larger, 2) change color, either lighter or darker, 3) develop an irregular shape, and 4) become itchy, sore, scaly, or bleed. Melanoma may also develop as a new mole or pigmented area of the skin or nail. A dark spot (“**ugly duckling**”) that looks much different from your other moles is suspicious for a melanoma.

### **How is it diagnosed?**

The doctor will perform a skin biopsy to confirm the diagnosis.

### **What is the treatment?**

Surgery is the only cure for melanoma. An area of normal skin around the melanoma is excised to make sure all the cancer is removed. Sometimes, lymph nodes are also biopsied. If the cancer has metastasized, you may require further surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or immunotherapy.

### **Self-care tips:**

You can help protect yourself by doing regular skin exams. A dermatologist can identify suspicious-looking lesions before they progress too far. If you must spend time in the sun, make sure you are well protected with a sunscreen of at least SPF 30, a hat, and protective clothing. Try to stay out of the sun during the hours of 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**For more information please visit our website: [www.pennstatehershey.org/web/dermatology/home](http://www.pennstatehershey.org/web/dermatology/home) and click on Health Information Library.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your provider at the location you were treated.  
Hershey Medical Center, UPC I, Suite 100 (717) 531-6820 or Nyes Road, (717) 657-4045.  
Penn State Hershey Medical Group, Colonnade Building (814)272-4445.

