

MOLES

What are moles?

Moles are collections of pigment cells (melanocytes) in the skin. They appear as flat, brown marks and may slowly become raised. They can be found anywhere on the body and some may lose their dark colouring. The vast majority of moles are benign (not cancerous) and do not become malignant.

When do moles appear?

Moles are not usually present at birth. They begin to appear during childhood, adolescence and early adult life. It is unusual to develop new moles when you are in your late thirties or older.

What are the worrying features in moles?

Do get into the habit of checking your moles from time to time and should you notice a mole **change in size, shape or colour** do not hesitate to get it checked by a specialist. Any one of these changes may indicate that the mole is changing. If you see a **new mole** appear and grow when you are in your thirties or older it is worth getting it checked as most moles appear in young life. Itching, on its own, without any other symptoms is not usually a sign of malignant change.

What are the typical features of a malignant melanoma?

A malignant melanoma usually looks different from an ordinary mole and may have one or more of these features:-

- An irregular edge
- Colour variation
- Quite rapid growth in size over weeks or months
- Bleeding or itching
- It may look very different from your other moles.

**BE AWARE OF THE MOLE THAT STANDS OUT IN THE CROWD.
IF IN DOUBT - CHECK IT OUT, SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE.**

REMEMBER: IF MOLE CANCER (MALIGNANT MELANOMA) IS TREATED EARLY, IT CAN BE CURED.