

ORDINARY MOLES

WHO DEVELOP MOLES?

Almost all of us. The average young adult in the UK has between 20 and 40 small brown flat or slightly raised marks their skin. They are totally painless and most people are unaware of them; however it is good to check all over your skin and get to know where your moles are. Re-check your skin on a monthly basis and especially look out for any new or changing moles.

WHAT ARE MOLES?

They are non-cancerous clusters of cells which are responsible for normal skin colour and for producing a suntan.

WHEN AND WHY DO THEY APPEAR?

Young children usually have very few moles and most moles first appear between the ages of 8 and 20. We have most moles as young adults and with time many disappear without treatment. Older people often have a number of brown marks on their skin but very few of these are moles.

We do not know why moles appear but children who have spent a lot of time in the sun often have a larger than average number.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

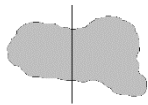
When they first appear moles are flat brown circles or ovals on the skin surface. They can usually be covered by the blunt end of a pencil and are present throughout the year, unlike freckles which fade during winter. As we get older moles can change with us, however if you notice any change in a mole you should get your GP to take a look at it as soon as possible. In older adults, moles are often a darker brown and may be raised above the skin surface. On the face many moles have one or two central hairs.

DO THEY NEED TREATMENT?

Occasionally moles are removed. Most moles are quite normal and should be left alone, however if a mole has become inflamed or irritated or is showing a change in size, shape or colour, your doctor may decide to remove it.


WHAT CHANGES DO I NEED TO BE AWARE OF?

A - Asymmetry [i.e. if you cut the mole in half, both sides do not look the same e.g.



B - Irregular or fuzzy Borders

C - Colour change [if there are 2 or more colours within the mole, these colours could be blue, black, red, grey, white or pink]

D - Diameter more than 7 mm  i.e. larger than the diameter of a pencil

E - Rapid Enlargement/Evolving

HOW IS A MOLE REMOVED?

By a small operation under local anaesthetic. There is no cream or ointment that will make moles disappear.

SHOULD PEOPLE WITH LARGE NUMBER OF MOLES TAKE ANY SPECIAL CARE IN THE SUN?

Yes. **Avoid sunburn.** Protect your entire skin, not just the moles, with a sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher. Avoid direct exposure to the sun between 11am & 3pm. A loose cotton T-shirt and a hat are useful and comfortable.

For further information about moles we suggest you view the information leaflet on melanocytic naevi (moles) on the website of the British Association of Dermatologists www.bad.org.uk