

## What Causes Malignant Melanoma ?

With more understanding of skin cancer, the extent to which it affects people becomes fully known. In fact, it is the most common form of cancer in the United States and Australia to date. It is also becoming increasingly prevalent in many other countries throughout the world.

Whilst you might think this is scare mongering, the reality is that most forms of skin cancer are fairly easy to treat provided they are identified early on. As most skin cancer starts on the surface of the skin, it is easy to identify if you examine your skin regularly. With early identification comes a rapid treatment with total success.

However malignant melanoma does not fit into this category. If not spotted early and treated it can spread. Ultimately it can be life threatening if not treated early enough. This article will detail what is malignant melanoma and the best ways to avoid getting this disease.

There are two factors that are thought to cause cancer. These are your genetic makeup and exposure to one or more environmental conditions. As far as malignant melanoma is concerned, the environmental condition that causes the disease is ultraviolet radiation (UVA and UVB radiation - ultraviolet radiation on different wavelengths). We are exposed to UVA and UVB radiation everyday as it comes from the Sun.

Depending on your genetic makeup, too much ultraviolet radiation can cause the DNA of one or more cells to mutate. The genes within the DNA transform to be called oncogenes. They promote tumor growth and make the cell cancerous. A cancerous cell will divide and proliferate rather than die like many other cells that are damaged. This proliferation can sometime be rapid and the cancerous cells can become invasive.

Invasive growth harms the surrounding tissues and organs. In some cases the cancerous growths can prevent the organs from functioning or can start to grow into the organs culminating with the destruction of the organ. Should the cancer get into the lymphatic system then it can spread throughout the body. When this occurs it becomes hard to stop the spread and difficult to treat.

So, whilst ultraviolet radiation and our exposure to sunlight is thought to be the primary environmental cause of malignant melanoma, there are a number of genetic factors that increase the risk.

Having a family member who has or had skin cancer in the past increases your chances of developing the disease. If your skin burns easily in the sun and turns red rather than tanning then you are more at risk. If you have light colored eyes or blond or red hair then you are more at risk. If you have moles on your body then you are more at risk to skin cancer.

Melanoma can start as a brown mark or spot on the skin. This may be hard to distinguish from an ordinary mole however if it starts to change color or gets larger then this may be a sign of melanoma. If you notice something like this happening on your body you should see a doctor.

It is virtually impossible to completely avoid sunlight and thus prevent melanoma. The only thing that is practical is to take measure to avoid being over exposed to the Sun. This means always wearing a hat and sunglasses. Wear clothing that covers most of your body. Put sunscreen on areas that are not covered by the clothing, like the face or arms.

## About the Author

Find out some [symptoms of skin cancer](http://symptomsofskincancer.net) at <http://symptomsofskincancer.net>

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