



CHECKUPS OF BIRTHMARKS PREVENTION OF MALIGN SKIN CANCERS

The MMA Melanoma Center operates through both Melanoma Ambulance, as a place where once a week the checkups and control examinations are carrying out for patients underwent melanoma surgery by plastic surgeon or dermatologist, and Melanoma Consilium administrated by interdisciplinary team (composed of plastic surgeon, dermatologist, maxillofacial surgeon, radiologist, pathologist) who decides about the optimal way of melanoma treatment.

Marking 170 years of Military Medical Academy, it has been organized the action of preventive skin examination aimed at early discover of melanoma and the other skin cancers, concerning that their incidence rises each year in Serbia and world-wide, as one of the consequences of long time exposure to the sun and ultraviolet radiation

We believe this activity will help our citizens to closely be informed about the significance of skin exam and sun protection aimed at better treatment of this malignant disease.

CLINIC FOR DERMATOVENEROLOGY CLINIC FOR PLASTIC SURGERY AND BURNS

All patients having a GP's referral or referral which has to be pre-certified by a relevant NIPH's Branch Office (for non-residents of Belgrade) can be seen by an appointment every workday from 08.00 a.m. to 02.30 p.m.

Examinations for patients who use the MMA's diagnostic and therapeutic services at their request and their own charge are carried out Monday to Friday between 03.30 p.m. and 07.30 p.m.

The MMA Melanoma Ambulance is intended for patients suffering from melanoma. It operates every Monday from 10 a.m. to 02.00 p.m. and all examinations can be book via telephone lines +381 11 360 90 10.

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Why It Is Important to Check Birthmarks?

Self-examination and skin exam are basic method for skin cancer early discover. Among them, melanoma is the most important due to his capacity to spread in lymph nodes and internal organs but it can be completely curable in case it is timely surgically removed. However, a common case is that apparently inconspicuous skin mark grows and changes throughout the years, but not itching nor hurting and until the bleeding occurs the person does not seek medical help, but until that moment it can be possible that tumor has been spread in organism.

What is Melanoma?

The melanoma represents malignant skin tumor composed of the pigment-producing melanocytes. When they start to multiply and grow without limits and order along with spreading in the other tissues, melanoma arises. In case melanoma is removed in its early phases when located in superficial tissue skin layers, it can be 100% curable and it will not have consequence to the general health condition. Spreading in distant tissues and/or organs is noted when the tumor reaches blood vessels. In case it is not timely removed in the phase it is yet superficial, this disease became difficult to treat. Therefore, basic goal is timely discover of melanoma!

How Does Melanoma Look Like?

Melanoma can occur anywhere on the skin, even underneath the nail, posterior segment of the eye, mucous membrane of the mouth and genital area, i.e. all places where melanocytes are present. In case of male patients it is marked the most often on back, in case of female the critical region are lower extremities. They can be brown or black and rarely red, same color as a skin or white, on the same level as skin or upper. They can appear on/in the already existent birthmark or completely "clear" part of the skin. Rule says melanoma grows up slowly, but some forms can grow rapidly looking as the new skin nodes. If this change is apperceived, you should contact physician and remove it surgically. During one skin exam when the melanoma presence is tested, a so call ABCDE rule is utilized.

Which Are the Other Forms of Malignant Skin Tumors?

The most often incidence, beside melanoma, has basal cell and planocellular carcinoma (epithelium). They are manifested as red marks, tumors, and/or skin ulcerations. Their malignant potential is much lesser than melanoma, while surgical treatment represents the permanent method of healing. In addition to these two types, there are also the other ones, occurring much rarely.

How Does Melanoma Is Treated?

Early discover and surgical removal along with the histopathological examination (tissue is analyzed using the microscope) represent the most successful treating methods. Beside clinical check-up, dermoscopy provides much better visibility and more precise diagnosis. In case the melanoma has spread to the internal organs the following methods are applied: surgery, chemotherapy, immunological, molecular and/or radio therapy.

Skin Self-Examination- Prevention of Malignant Skin Tumors

Considering that melanoma and the other skin tumors are completely and permanently curable when their treatment start from the superficial skin layer, occasional self-examination, once in three months when





helping the other family members significantly contribute to its early discover thus treatment with successful outcome. Persons who have 50 or more birthmarks are advised to visit their dermatologist once a year, as well.

What Is Dermoscopy?

Dermoscopy is a simple, noninvasive and rapid method that can better suggest a malignant or benign pigmented skin lesion. Dermoscopic imaging may be saved in computer to be compared after a while with an early imaging or send it to the other dermatologist for additional expertise.

SELF-EXAMINATION

Practicing skin self-examination, you will be able to see changes and establish if they are new or changing in time which can be the reason to make a medical appointment. This is the way for early discover of melanoma or the other skin cancers, when the healing is complete and permanent.



Check the front side of your chest using the mirror, and lateral sides with raised hands.



Bend your elbows and closely check underarm areas, the tops and palms of your hands.



Look your calves, the backs of your thighs and bottoms of your feet using the hand mirror.



Look the back of your neck and head with the hand mirror while parting your hair so you can check your scalp.



At the end, use hand mirror and check your lower and upper back and genital area.

ABCDE rule

During the skin examination it is necessary to pay attention to the size, diameter and borders of pigmented skin changes. Any other skin change either pigmented or not, changing quickly and growing should be removed and examined.

- **ASYMMETRY** – Spot's form and size don't look the same on both sides.
- **BORDERS** – Spot has blurry and jagged edges.
- **COLOUR** – Color of the mole is different appearing in two or more mixed shades of tan, brown, black, red, blue.
- **DIAMETER** – Although the melanoma are most commonly larger than 6 mm in diameter, they can be even smaller.
- **EVOLVING OVER TIME** – Each mole or other skin change looking different from the rest or changing in size, shape, color need to be surgically removed and histopathologically examined.





Protection from Ultraviolet (UV) Radiation

The causes of melanoma are not still known; however, inherited susceptibility (genes) and ultraviolet light are noted. The most relevant factors that melanoma develop later in life are extreme sun exposure, and especially, burns in early childhood. One of the sure facts is that UV radiation from tanning beds may lead also to melanoma. That leads to the conclusion that protection from ultraviolet radiation represents the basic prevention from skin cancer.

A good rule concerning the sun protection is NON EXPOSURE, i.e. avoid the sun between the hours of 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., in some countries even from 10 a.m. March to October. You should move in the shadow and take in consideration that sun umbrella does not protect from UV radiation (but only heat, i.e. infrared radiation). The second step is protective clothes, namely, being dressed during high radiation level, in the last few years also known as UV index. If the sun exposure lasts for several hours, it is obligatory to have long sleeves and legs made of summer materials (as seen in regions where people traditionally work in extreme conditions)- hat with a wide brim and sunglasses are obligatory (cataract, i.e. clouding of the lens is also the consequence of UVA radiation). Finally, for exposed body parts (face, hands, legs, feet) use protective sun cream with a minimally 30 UVA+UVB factor during the summer each 1-2 hours because it removes sweating, swimming, etc.

Sun protection for Children

Sun burns during the childhood (even they are only red and painful, without blisters) is directly connected with a larger number of birthmarks as well as higher risk for skin carcinoma and melanoma. So, childhood is a risk period for skin cancer when higher protection is necessary. Children younger than one year should not be exposed to the sun rays and do not put the protective sun creams. If the stay on the sun cannot be avoided they should use only creams with physical filters (zinc oxide and titanium oxide) without chemical filters. Later, a direct exposure to the sun rays should be avoided between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and use the sun protection creams with a factor higher than 30 (50+ if possible). Having in mind the fact that children can also suffer from melanoma, although rarely, a regular testing of birthmarks is required.

Advices for Sun Protection

- Avoid all necessary sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Wear protective clothes, hat and UV blocking sunglasses
- Put protective sun creams
- Skin self-examination
- Check the skin of the partner and family members
- Do not use tanning beds
- Visit dermatologist once a year.

For more information about sun protection and self-examination visit www.euromelanoma-org/serbia and www.udvs.org/euromelanoma.

