



What is a nevus? Nevus is the medical term for mole. These are common growths in the skin that arise from the pigment producing cells of the skin known as melanocytes. They can be pigmented (colored) or skin colored. They may be completely flat or a raised bump. Moles may be present at birth (congenital nevus) or arise later in life. The majority of moles will develop during childhood and adolescence. The number and types of moles one develops is largely a familial trait.

A normal mole often is round or oval, symmetric with even coloring throughout. Most benign moles are smaller than 6mm--the size of a pencil eraser. Although most moles are benign, a small number may progress into melanoma skin cancer. Warnings signs for an abnormal mole include the following:

ABCDs of Melanoma

- A: Asymmetrical shape: One half does not match the other
- B: Border Irregularity: The edges are ragged, notched or blurred
- C: Color: The color is not uniform
- D: Diameter: Larger than a pencil eraser (6mm)

If a mole exhibits any of the above traits, you should bring it to your provider's attention. If it appears suspicious, a biopsy of the mole may be done. Any mole that grows, changes in shape or color, or bleeds should be evaluated. Regular self examination of the skin is recommended along with sun protection to prevent development of skin cancers.