

Melanoma Skin Cancer in West Virginia

Melanoma Quick Facts:

- There are three primary types of skin cancer: basal cell, squamous cell, and melanoma. Melanoma, while more uncommon, is the most dangerous of the three.¹
- Incidence of melanoma skin cancer has increased about 38% between 2000 and 2019 (Figure 1).²
- Between 2015-2019:
 - * 2,638 melanomas were diagnosed in West Virginia, which is about 528 diagnoses per year.²
 - * The counties with the highest rates of melanoma skin cancer were Summers, Putnam, Ohio, Grant, and Mineral. The counties with the lowest rates were Hardy, Barbour, Clay, Tucker, and McDowell.²
 - * Melanoma is the 6th most commonly diagnosed cancer in West Virginia.

For more information, please contact the West Virginia Cancer Registry.

oepe.wv.gov/cancer

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What is melanoma?

Melanoma is a serious type of skin cancer that develops in melanocytes, skin cells that produce the pigment that gives skin its color. Melanomas can occur anywhere on the skin, but are most often found on the chest and back in men, and on the legs in women. Other common sites include the neck and face. Melanoma is very treatable if caught early, but can be fatal if not treated early enough.¹

A change in your skin is the most common sign of skin cancer. This could be in the form of a new growth, a sore that won't heal, or a change in a mole.³

A simple way to remember the warning signs of melanoma is to remember the **A-B-C-D-Es** of melanoma:³

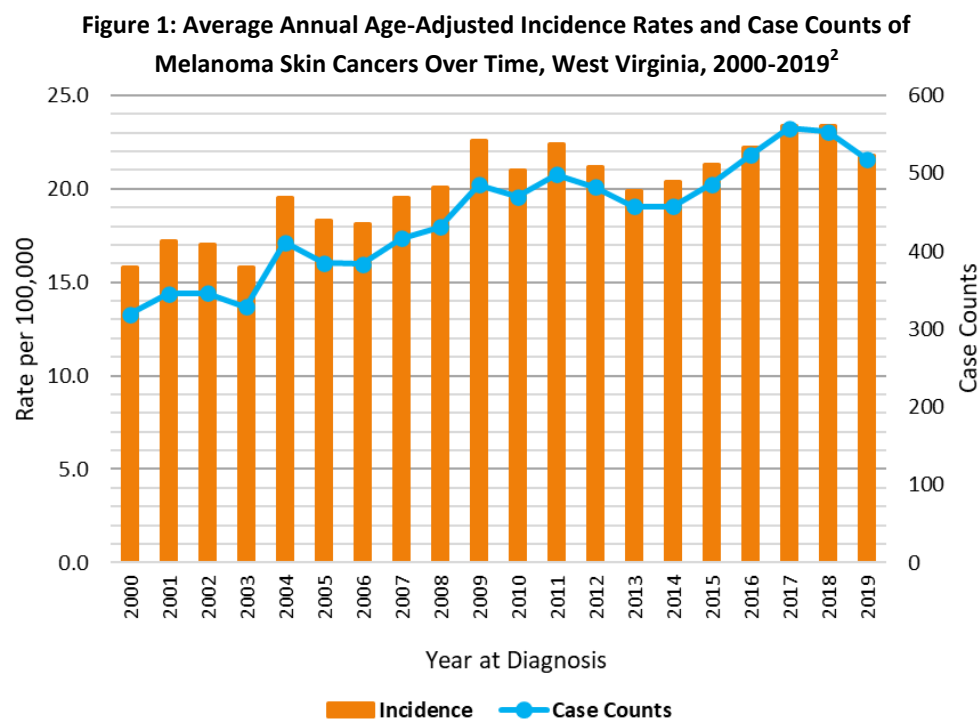
A — **Asymmetry**: Does the mole/spot have an irregular shape with two parts that look different?

B — **Border**: Is the border irregular or jagged?

C — **Color**: Is the color uneven?

D — **Diameter**: Is the spot larger than the size of a pea?

E — **Evolving**: Has the spot grown or changed in the past few weeks or months?



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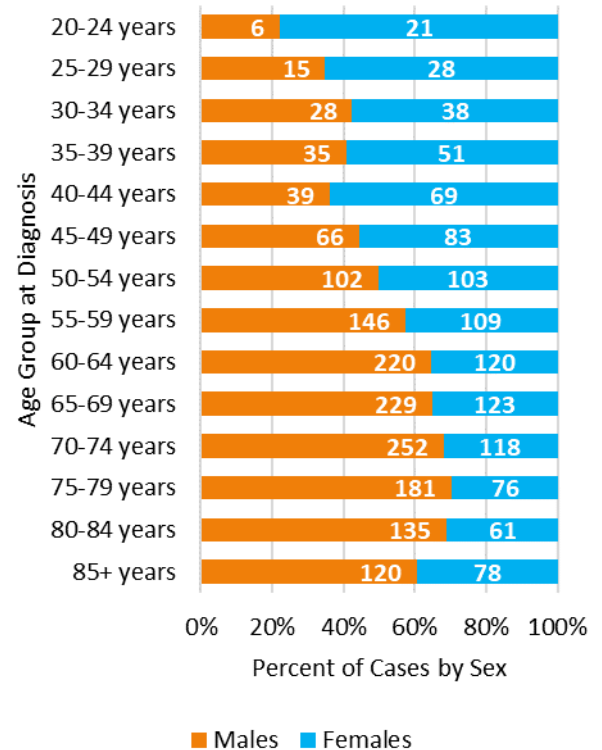
Melanoma Risk Factors:⁴

- **Ultraviolet Light** — Exposure to UV rays from sources such as sunlight, tanning beds, and sun lamps can increase risk.
- **Moles** — Having many moles or atypical moles increases risk.
- **Fair Skin, Freckling, and Light Hair** — Risk is higher for those with red or blonde hair, blue or green eyes, and/or fair skin that freckles.
- **Age and Sex** — Risk of developing melanoma varies by age and sex: risk is higher in women before age 50, while risk is higher for men after age 50 (Figure 2).

Ways to Prevent Melanoma:⁵

- **Sunscreen** — Use sunscreen that provides broad spectrum protection from UVA and UVB rays, with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Sunscreen should be applied generously (about 1 ounce), with reapplication every 2 hours. You may need to reapply more often due to sunscreen washing off when you sweat, swim, or dry off with a towel.
- **Protective Clothing** — Wear clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, long pants or dresses, a wide-brimmed hat, and UV-blocking sunglasses to block UVA and UVB rays.
- **Shade** — Seek shade when possible; the sun's rays are strongest between 10 am and 4 pm, so limit the amount of time you spend in direct sunlight during those hours.
- **Avoid Tanning Beds and Sun Lamps** — Tanning bed use has been linked with an increased risk of melanoma, since they give out UVA and UVB rays like sunlight. If you want a tan, an option is to use sunless tanning lotion.

Figure 2: Distribution and Percentage of Melanoma Skin Cancer Diagnoses by Age Group and Sex, West Virginia, 2015-2019²



References:

- 1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. What is Skin Cancer?. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/what-is-skin-cancer.htm. Accessed May 2023.
- 2) West Virginia Cancer Registry
- 3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. What Are the Symptoms?. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/symptoms.htm. Accessed May 2023
- 4) American Cancer Society. Risk Factors for Melanoma Skin Cancer. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/melanoma-skin-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/risk-factors.html>. Accessed May 2023.
- 5) American Cancer Society. How Do I Protect Myself from Ultraviolet (UV) Rays?. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/sun-and-uv/uv-protection.html>. Accessed May 2023