



Northland Plastic Surgery

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Patient Information sheet

Melanoma

Melanoma is a cancer of the pigmented cells of the skin.

About 85% of all people diagnosed will survive when the melanoma is removed before it becomes well developed. A melanoma if neglected will spread to other parts of the body. Men and women are equally at risk. Men are more likely to develop a melanoma on the face, back or chest while in women the arms and legs are more common. A melanoma can occur at any age but rarely in childhood.

THE CAUSE OF MELANOMA

Melanocytes are skin cells that produce a pigment called melanin when exposed to the sun.

They lie at the junction between the upper(epidermis) and lower(dermis) layers of the skin. Suntan and moles are due to melanin. If the melanocytes (the cells that produce melanin) multiply in an uncontrolled way, a melanoma results. The pigment does not cause cancer but in fact protects against it.

Although doctors do not understand the causes fully, they do know that exposure to the sun (especially in fair skinned people exposed from an early age) increases the risk.

About half of all melanomas begin in a mole that has been present for some years. The changes in the melanocytes that lead to a melanoma take time and can usually be detected early if regular medical check ups of the skin are performed. Although exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation increases the risk of developing melanoma, the cancer does not necessarily form on the skin that has been directly exposed to the sun.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BENIGN MOLES AND MELANOMAS

Benign(non cancerous) moles tend to have a symmetrical round or oval shape. They may be flat or raised, and the colour is usually a uniform shade of tan, brown or black.

Adults usually have up to 50 normal moles but some have hundreds.

A medical examination is needed if a mole shows any change such as;

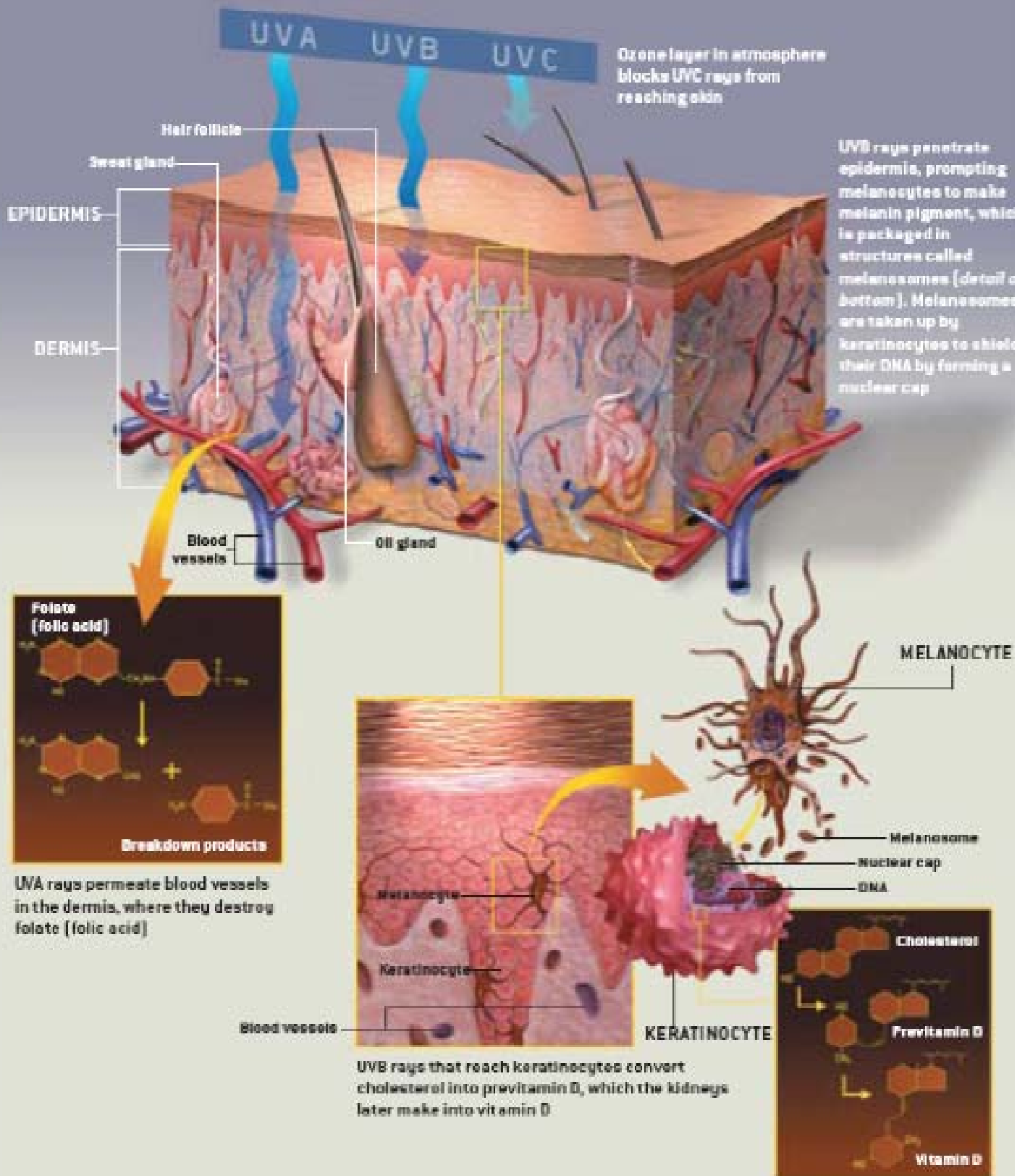
- A change in colour or variation or waterstaining appearance.
- Development of an irregular shape a tendency to spread along the skin.
- An increase in size.



SKIN IN THE SUN

THE ULTRAVIOLET (UV) RAYS of the sun are a mixed blessing: they spur the production of vitamin D but destroy folate and can cause cancer by damaging DNA. Melanin pigment produced

by melanocytes protects against DNA damage and folate breakdown. But keratinocytes must get enough UV rays to make vitamin D. —H.G.J. and G.C.



A melanoma that arises from normally pigmented skin may have irregular shades of brown or black or have multi coloured patches of blue red or white. Some melanomas contain very little melanin and are called amelanotic melanomas.

We can reduce the risk of melanomas and other skin cancers by being particularly diligent about protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays not only with the daily use of high SPF sunblock creams (with top ups at 11am and 2pm) but also using adequate clothing coverage of the skin and head protection at all times when exposed to the sun.

AN OUNCE OF PROTECTION IS WORTH A TON OF CURE

COSTS

Costs are generally covered via your insurance company and are quoted for insurance company approval prior to any operation. The nature of surgery will vary and the insurance company is asked to confirm with you directly the level of cover available under your policy.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- To reveal all medications, conditions, history, allergies, recreational drug use AND SMOKING STATUS
- To understand all aspects of the information discussed at consultation and all written information given and to seek clarification if needed.
- To understand that you are entering a process where your surgeon is dedicated to the best possible outcome. This requires engaging in the complexities of biology, healing and individual differences,
- That additional stages or further surgeries are occasionally required and that the surgeon's best efforts are the basis of the charges. Further surgeries will incur additional charges in pursuit of a particular result.
- To understand that the initial consultation is charged for but all subsequent pre operative consultations pertaining to this surgery are at no charge.
- To understand and accept the above conditions.