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## Freckles appearing on face

Several skin lesions are very common and almost always benign (non-cancerous). These conditions include moles, freckles, skin tags, benign lentigines, and seborrheic keratoses. However, moles are the most commonly examined for cancer if changes are detected. What is a mole? Moles are growths on the skin that are usually brown or black. Moles can appear anywhere on the skin, alone or in groups. Most moles appear in early childhood and during the first 20 years of a person's life. Some moles might not appear until later in life. It is normal to have between 10 to 40 moles by adulthood. As the years pass, moles usually change slowly, becoming raised and lighter in color. Often, hairs develop on the mole. Some moles will not change at all, while others will slowly disappear over time. What should I look for when examining my moles? Most moles are benign. The only moles that are of medical concern are those that look different than other existing moles or those that first appear after age 20. If you notice changes in a mole's color, height, size, or shape, you should have a dermatologist (skin doctor) evaluate it. You also should have moles checked if they bleed, ooze, itch, appear scaly or become tender or painful. Examine your skin with a mirror or ask someone to help you. Pay special attention to areas of your skin that are often exposed to the sun, such as the hands, arms, chest, neck, face and ears. If your moles do not change over time, there is little reason for concern. If you see any signs of change in an existing mole, if you have a new mole, or if you want a mole to be removed for cosmetic reasons, talk to your dermatologist. The following ABCDEs are important signs of moles that could be cancerous. If a mole displays any of the signs listed below, have it checked immediately by a dermatologist: Asymmetry – One half of the mole does not match the other half. Border – The border or edges of the mole are ragged, blurred, or irregular. Color – The color of the mole is not the same throughout or has shades of tan, brown, black, blue, white or red. Diameter – The diameter of a mole is larger than the eraser of a pencil. Elevation/Evolution – A mole appears elevated, or raised from the skin. Are the moles changing over time? Melanoma is a form of skin cancer. The most common location for melanoma in men is the back; in women, it is the lower leg. Melanoma is the most common cancer in women ages 25 to 29. Above: Example of cancerous mole. What are the different types of moles? Congenital nevi are moles that appear at birth. Congenital nevi occur in about 1 in 100 people. These moles might be more likely to develop into melanoma than are moles that appear after birth. If the mole is more than 8 inches in diameter, it poses more risk of becoming cancerous. Atypical nevi are moles that are larger than average (larger than a pencil eraser) and irregular in shape. They tend to have uneven color with dark brown centers and lighter, uneven edges. These moles tend to be hereditary. People with atypical nevi might have more than 100 moles and have a greater chance of developing malignant (cancerous) melanoma. Any changes in the mole should be checked by a dermatologist to detect skin cancer. What happens if your dermatologist is concerned about your mole? If a dermatologist believes the mole needs to be evaluated further or removed entirely, he or she will first take a biopsy (small tissue sample of the mole) to examine thin sections of the tissue under a microscope. This is a simple procedure. (If the dermatologist thinks the mole might be cancerous, cutting through the mole will not cause the cancer to spread.) If the mole is found to be cancerous, the dermatologist will remove the entire mole by cutting out the entire mole and a rim of normal skin around it, and stitching the wound closed. What is a skin tag? A skin tag is a small flap of tissue that hangs off the skin by a connecting stalk. Skin tags are benign and are not dangerous. They are usually found on the neck, chest, back, armpits, under the breasts, or in the groin area. Skin tags appear most often in women, especially with weight gain, and in middle-aged and elderly people. Skin tags usually don't cause any pain. However, they can become irritated if anything such as clothing or jewelry rubs on them. Image of a skin tag. What is a lentigo? A lentigo (plural: lentigines) is a spot on the skin that is darker (usually brown) than the surrounding skin. Lentigines are more common among Caucasian patients, especially those with fair skin, but can occur in anyone. What are freckles? Freckles are small brown spots usually found on the face and arms. Freckles are extremely common and are not a health threat. They are more often seen in the summer, especially among lighter-skinned people and people with light or red hair. However, freckles can occur in anyone, and appear as darker brown spots in people with darker skin. Both men and women get freckles at an equal rate. What are seborrheic keratoses? Seborrheic keratoses are brown or black growths usually found on the chest and back, as well as on the head. They originate from cells called keratinocytes. As they develop, seborrheic keratoses take on a warty appearance. Moles occur when cells in the skin grow in a cluster instead of being spread throughout the skin. These cells are called melanocytes, and they make the pigment that gives skin its natural color. Moles might darken after exposure to the sun, during the teen years, and during pregnancy. What are the causes of lentigines? Exposure to the sun seems to be the major cause of lentigines. Lentigines most often appear on parts of the body that get the most sun, including the face and hands. Some lentigines might be caused by genetics (family history) or by medical procedures such as radiation therapy. Above: Image of lentigines. What causes freckles? Causes of freckles include genetics, diseases (such as xeroderma pigmentosum, a rare disease that causes an increased sensitivity to ultraviolet light, such as the sun), and exposure to the sun. Above: Image of freckles. What causes seborrheic keratoses? The cause of seborrheic keratoses is unknown. They are seen more often as people get older. They do not lead to skin cancer. Above: Image of seborrheic keratoses. If a dermatologist believes the mole needs to be evaluated further or removed entirely, he or she will first take a biopsy (small tissue sample of the mole) to examine thin sections of the tissue under a microscope. This is a simple procedure. (If the dermatologist thinks the mole might be cancerous, cutting through the mole will not cause the cancer to spread.) If the mole is found to be cancerous, the dermatologist will remove the entire mole by cutting out the entire mole and a rim of normal skin around it, and stitching the wound closed. Your dermatologist can remove a skin tag by cutting it off with a scalpel or scissors, with cryotherapy (freezing it off), or with electrosurgery (burning with an electric current). How are lentigines treated? There are several methods for treating lentigines: Cryotherapy (freezing it off) Laser surgery Creams that are applied to the skin (these include retinoids and bleaching agents) What is the treatment for freckles? Since freckles are almost always harmless, there really is no need to treat them. As with many skin conditions, it's best to avoid the sun as much as possible, or use a sunscreen. This is especially important because people who freckle easily (such as lighter-skinned people) are more likely to develop skin cancer. If you feel that your freckles are a problem or you don't like the way they look, you can cover them up with makeup. How are seborrheic keratoses treated? Seborrheic keratoses are benign and are not contagious. Therefore, they don't need to be treated. If you decide to have seborrheic keratoses removed because you don't like the way they look, or because they are chronically irritated by clothing, methods for removing them include cutting them off, cryotherapy, and electrosurgery. July 10, 2020Freckles and moles are words often used interchangeably, but they aren't the same. So, what's the difference between them?Moles are raised skin spots often appearing alone or in groups, whereas freckles are clusters of flat skin spots that are typically lighter in color. In this article, we break down the differences between moles and freckles to illustrate what makes a mole different from a freckle, as well as highlighting some tell-tale signs that your mole should be checked by a dermatologist.What is a Mole?Skin moles are a collection of melanocyte cells that often appear as black or brown spots. They typically appear alone but can also appear in groups. Most moles are "raised," which is their distinguishing characteristic. With time, moles may shift in shape and dimension and can change color or raise above the skin.Moles are considered temporary growths because they can appear and disappear. Disappearing moles often begin as a small flat spot, and become slightly raised overtime, then they can get pale and disappear.Disappearing Moles: What do they Mean?A change in the appearance of a mole is a common sign of possible cancer, but what does it mean if a mole disappears? Mole disappearances are not always linked to skin cancer. Other triggers may include:Natural changes: Moles are naturally evolving, which can often be mistaken as a sign of cancer. However, this isn't always the case since it is common for moles to lighten over time as though they were on their way to disappearing. Consistent changes in a mole's appearance are often no cause for alarm. When in doubt, it's best to get in touch with a dermatologist.Different kinds of skin growths: Not all skin growths are moles. Skin tags, cysts, warts, and rashes - some of which eventually may heal on their own - can appear as moles to the untrained eye and trick people into thinking their mole has disappeared.Skin injury: Scars, burns, and other injuries inflicted on a site where a mole is may cause changes to the skin that can make the mole less visible. For instance, when part of the skin is torn or burned off, the mole may be less visible as a result.If you notice that your mole is changing in shape, color, or texture, it's always a good idea to get it looked at by a dermatologist. They can perform tests to understand the underlying reasons causing your mole to change in appearance.Different Types of MolesThere are three common types of moles, including:Congenital Moles: These are the moles you are born with. Also referred to as plural nevi, these moles are often round or oval in shape and can be 1.5 cm in size or greater. About 1 in every 100 children are born with congenital moles. There is currently no known cause for congenital moles in babies.Acquired Mole: Also called a common mole, these are moles that appear on the skin after birth. Common moles are usually 5 mm to 6 mm in size and have a smooth surface, with pigmentation ranging from light to dark brown. Common moles typically appear with prolonged exposure to the sun, but rarely turn into skin cancer.Atypical Mole: Atypical moles or dysplastic nevus are moles that are larger in shape (more than 6 mm) and have both flat and raised components. Unlike most moles, the visual characteristics of an atypical mole aren't consistent. Instead of having one shape, size, and color, atypical moles can appear splotchy and fuzzy, and in various colors or shades - all of which can be a cause for concern. Atypical moles are especially alarming when they're itchy or irritating.What is a Freckle?Freckles are small clustered spots on the skin. More often than not, freckles appear after prolonged sun exposure, as the skin produces melanin triggered by exposure to UV rays. Unlike moles, freckles almost always appear in groups and rarely alone.Freckles generally have the same appearance but can differ in color depending on the person's genetics and complexion. For instance, freckles may appear reddish for some people and light brown for others. Regardless of the specific color, these are typically darker than the rest of the surrounding skin.Two Types of FrecklesThere are two categories of freckles:Ephelides: Freckles or "normal" freckles are spots that are either caused by sun exposure or genetic makeup. This type of freckle is more common in people who have light skin or blonde or red hair. On the other hand, people with darker hair, eyes, and skin are less likely to develop freckles. Ephelides freckles often appear on the face, upper body, and hands — all of which are areas that are prone to unprotected sun exposure. These freckles light up with sun protection or after the season changes.Lentigines: Lentigines, also called sun spots, are primarily caused by exposure to the sun and in particular, sunburn. These spots tend to be darker in appearance and don't fade as easily as ephelides. They are also unlikely to fade or lighten with less sun exposure. Similar to ephelides freckles, sun spots appear in exposure-prone areas such as the face, chest, and arms.Moles vs. Freckles: What's the Difference?Moles and freckles are two of the most common skin growths. One of the easiest ways to distinguish between the two is to simply feel the growth's surface.Moles are often raised whereas freckles are generally flat. Looking at the pigment can also give you an idea as to whether you're looking at a mole or a freckle: the former is significantly darker, while the latter is typically only a few shades lighter than your skin color, and often appears reddish or light brown. Moles generally appear as one spot, whereas freckles appear in distinct groups.The more significant difference between moles and freckles is that freckles rarely develop into skin cancer. The overproduction of melanin, which causes freckles to appear, often only changes the skin on a surface level.On the other hand, more serious growths like moles can be symptomatic of cancer or another disease. Moles that are larger than a pencil eraser should be checked for cancer.Can Freckles Turn Into Moles?Freckles and moles are two different types of skin growths. Freckles occur as a result of sun exposure or genetics, whereas moles appear after skin cells develop into a cluster instead of spreading out into the skin. Ultimately, the mechanisms involved in the appearance of both are different and separate, meaning freckles can't turn into moles and vice versa.Signs You Need to Get Your Skin CheckedFreckles are rarely harmful and usually require no medical treatment. The appearance of freckles can be lightened with less sun exposure or proactive skin care involving broad-spectrum sunscreen with 50+ SPF.Moles on the other hand, are known to develop into cancerous growths. Here are some signs that you should get your mole checked for skin cancer:Your mole is asymmetrical. If your mole is inconsistent in terms of shape, color, or size, there's a possibility that this is a sign of skin cancer. Moles are generally no larger than ¼ inches in diameter (the size of a pencil eraser) - moles larger than this require attention.Your mole's border is jagged or blurred. Common moles have distinct borders. If your mole's edges are notched or irregular in any way, consider having it checked by a dermatologist.Your mole has some discoloration. Moles are typically brown or black. If your mole has patches of pink, red, white, blue, or a combination of these colors, you should be seen by a dermatologist.Get Your Moles Checked at Walk-in DermatologyWorried that your mole might be signaling something serious? At Walk-in Dermatology, we can help. Call us or book your appointment through our website to get the answers you've been looking for.

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