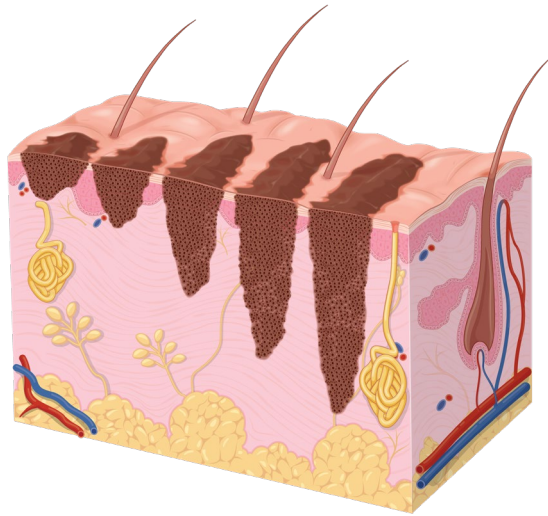


Melanoma



Different depths (stages) of melanoma.

Several photos and more in-depth information is available at: www.skintel.co.nz/articles/melanoma
Or, by using the QR code on the back page.

What is a Melanoma?

Malignant melanoma (MM) is the 3rd most common type of skin cancer and is the fourth most common **registered** cancer in New Zealand. NZ has one of the highest rates of melanoma in the world.

About 6% of melanomas spread to the rest of the body.

The most important cause is damage from the sun's rays over many years. People with fair skin are the most susceptible to melanoma.

What are the Symptoms?

Melanomas can appear differently on the skin. They can appear as:

- A dark flat spot or lump that looks different to normal moles
- Rarely, a flesh-coloured spot or lump (amelanotic)
- Two-thirds are unrelated to an existing mole

What is the test for Melanoma?

A doctor may suspect a melanoma by examining the lesion. They may use a special magnifying glass (dermatoscope) to assist with this.

Normally, an excisional biopsy, which removes the whole lesion, is performed to confirm the diagnosis. In special situations, a partial biopsy may be undertaken, although this carries a risk of sampling the wrong area.

Biopsies are performed with local anaesthetic and the sample is sent to the lab for testing.

How is a Melanoma Treated?

Once the biopsy results are available, the melanoma is normally removed with a second surgical procedure using wide safety margins to reduce the risk of the melanoma coming back. The width of the safety margin is mostly determined by the depth of the melanoma and can be up to 2 cm.

If the melanoma is deep, it may require further investigations, such as scans to determine the extent (stage) of the melanoma. In some cases a sentinel lymph node biopsy (SLNB) may be performed although it is unclear whether this is beneficial.

Advanced melanomas may require additional treatments such as new

medications like immune system modulators.

In certain situations, other treatments may be used.

After Treatment

After a diagnosis of melanoma, you should get regular checks at least every six months initially.

This is to:

- Check if the melanoma comes back
- Detect a new melanoma - you have a 2-3 times risk of another melanoma.

Prevention

You can minimise your risk of melanoma with rigorous sun protection (even in winter), but in particular:

- Avoid sun in the middle of the day (10 am - 4 pm)
- Use SPF50+ sunscreen every day
- Use sun protective clothing, hats and sunglasses

Notes