



The Training Brief

Quick Reference mini-training Topics Malignant Melanoma

The purpose of this training topic is to understand the signs and symptoms of Melanoma. Firefighters have a 1.31 times greater risk of Malignant Melanoma than the general public.

Discussion

Fact: Firefighters have a 1.31 times greater risk of developing Malignant Melanoma than the general public.

Key Points: It cannot be understated about the importance of annual medical exams.

See a dermatologist regularly

You can download a medical form from our website that highlights the needed medical tests to be done if you're a firefighter.

https://firefightercancersupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Primary-care-cancer-evaluations-for-firefighters_HamrockMD_2016_FCSN.pdf

Action: Download and print the form. Bring it to your primary care physician. Discuss the risks firefighters have in regards to occupational cancer.

Take the recommended steps to reduce your risk.

Make the necessary changes

Melanoma is a cancer that begins in the melanocytes. Other names for this cancer include malignant melanoma and cutaneous melanoma.

Melanoma is much less common than some other types of skin cancers. But melanoma is more dangerous because it's much more likely to spread to other parts of the body if not caught and treated early.

Most skin cancers start in the top layer of skin, called the epidermis. There are 3 main types of cells in this layer:

- **Squamous cells**
- **Basal cells**
- **Melanocytes:** These are the cells that can become melanoma. They normally make a brown pigment called melanin, which gives the skin its tan or brown color. Melanin protects the deeper layers of the skin from some of the harmful effects of the sun.

Melanomas can develop anywhere on the skin, but they are more likely to start on the trunk (chest and back) in men and on the legs in women. The neck and face are other common sites.

Having darkly pigmented skin lowers your risk of melanoma at these more common sites, but anyone can get melanoma on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, or under the nails. Melanomas can also form in other parts of your body, such as the eyes, mouth, genitals, and anal area, but these are much less common than melanoma of the skin.

Signs and Symptoms:

The most important warning sign of melanoma is **a new spot on the skin or a spot that is changing in size, shape, color or spot that looks different from all of the other spots on your skin.**

- A sore that doesn't heal
- Spread of pigment from the border of a spot into surrounding skin
- Redness or a new swelling beyond the border of the mole
- Change in sensation, such as itchiness, tenderness, or pain
- Change in the surface of a mole – scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or the appearance of a lump or bump

Prevention:

- Use sun screen, wear a hat and clothing to cover exposed areas, use sunglasses, avoid tanning beds and sunlamps, and See a dermatologist regularly.

Source: American Cancer Society: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/melanoma-skin-cancer/about.html>