# Nevus, Pigmented (Moles)

Your caregiver has determined you have a non-cancerous (*benign*) growth, also known as moles (*benign melanocytic nevi or pigmented nevi*). Moles are accumulations of color (*pigment*) cells in the skin which:

- May remain flat.
- Become raised.
- Contain hairs.
- Remain smooth.
- Develop wrinkling.

It is important to watch moles because they may develop changes and become cancerous. This is not the common outcome. Most moles remain non-cancerous. Moles tend to increase in number during the first 3 decades of life. In addition, sun exposure increases the number of moles. Heredity also plays a role in the development of moles. If you have parents with a large number of moles, you are more likely to get moles. If a nevus becomes worrisome your caregiver may choose to remove it and have a specialist in looking at cells (*pathologist*) examine it under the microscope to make sure it has not become cancerous.

## LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING

- There is change in color or size of a mole.
- Itching or bleeding develops.
- The mole becomes larger than the diameter of a pencil.
- There is any spreading of color or redness and inflammation to areas near the mole.
- There is scaling, shedding of skin, or oozing from the mole.
- Pain or soreness and redness (*inflammation*) develop.
- The mole develops more than one color.
- The mole develops irregular borders.
- The mole develops flat and also raised areas within the mole.
- If hardness or softening develops within the mole or colored area.

Changes in a mole may be a concern. If any of the changes noted above occur in your mole, have a trained professional evaluate it and determine what treatment, if any, is necessary. It is important to look at your moles periodically so that you are able to notice any changes if they occur. Of note, moles tend to darken during pregnancy and with birth control pills (*oral contraceptive*). If you have a large number of moles, it is important to be seen annually by a skin doctor (*dermatologist*) for a total body skin examination.

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