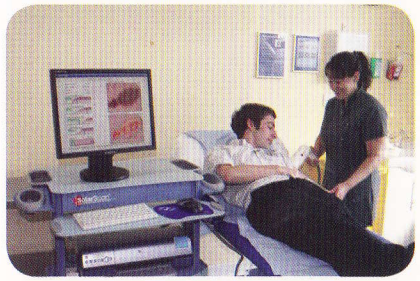
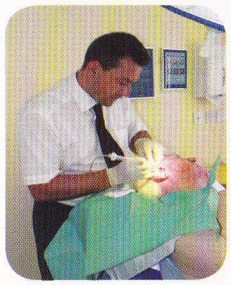
What is mole screening?

Mole screening is used to detect abnormal moles and to screen for melanoma skin cancer. A mole scan involves a clinical examination followed by a specialised computer scan of any suspicious moles. The Solarscan® is able to differentiate potentially life threatening moles from benign skin lesions providing an estimate of the risk of skin cancer. We combine this digital assessment with a clinical examination by one of our expert consultant dermatologists or plastic surgeons.





What are moles?

A mole is a type of skin lesion made up of a collection of cells in the skin called melanocytes. Melanocytes grow into raised skin coloured or brown skin lesions we call 'moles' or 'naevi'. The average adult has 15-40 moles, which can be inherited from one family generation to another. You should always have your moles checked if they bleed, itch or change in clinical appearance. This guide provides you with some tips on changes which may indicate melanoma skin cancer.

Normal Benign Moles

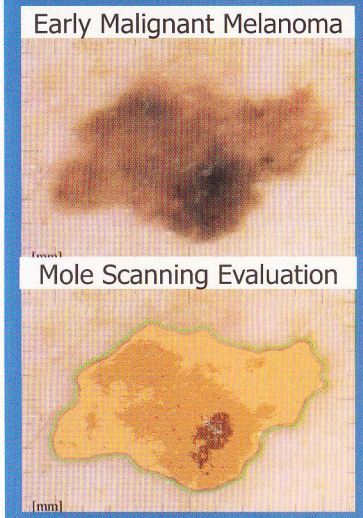
Normal moles are mostly small (less than 5mm) with smooth borders. They may be flat or raised and are usually evenly coloured with no more than one or two shades of brown. They are often unsightly especially if on the face. Unsightly moles can be shaved-off to produce excellent cosmetic results. Surgery can be provided as a 'one-stop' visit for around £200-250.

Dysplastic or Atypical Moles

Some people have unusual or atypical moles. These moles have an uneven colour, are often larger than normal moles and may have irregular borders. Dysplastic or atypical moles are not melanomas, but may identify people who may be at an increased risk. Atypical moles may be inherited in families and sometimes melanoma can be inherited.

Mole Scanning .....

The Solarscan® Imaging system can be used to assess the risk of melanoma in an individual mole. An appointment typically takes 30-minutes. We always combine assessment with a clinical examination by one of our Consultant team.



Why book a scan?

-Early detection can save your life before the melanoma becomes invasive.

-The NHS does not have the resources to adopt mole scanning for patients at risk.

-A mole scan can provide you with reassurance about your moles and potential to change.

Malignant Melanoma

A malignant melanoma is produced by abnormal growth of melanocytes in the skin. Melanoma cells can potentially invade the deeper layers of the skin and spread through the lymphatic or blood system. When caught early, surgery is normally curative. Hence, mole scanning can potentially save your life by detecting abnormal moles before they become invasive. Early detection is the key to good health.

Warning Signs of Malignant Melanoma....

RECENT APPEARANCE

If a mole or a freckle has appeared recently on normal looking skin, especially if it's colour is uneven or if it is growing rapidly, you should show it to your doctor. Remember that some melanomas are not darkly coloured, but they are likely to show some of the warning signs described in this brochure. It is normal for moles to appear during childhood and early adulthood.

ITCHING OR BLEEDING

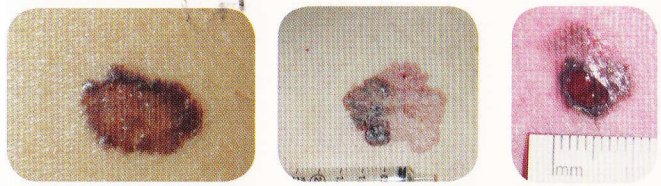
A recurring itch may also be a warning sign, but only if other changes are noticeable in the mole. Many skin conditions can be itchy but are usually not serious. If a mole starts to bleed, you should always have it examined by your GP.

ASYMMETRY

Normal moles or freckles are completely symmetrical. If you were to draw a line through a normal spot, you would have two symmetrical halves. In cases of skin cancer, spots will not look the same on both sides. Changing symmetry is a warning sign.

CHANGE IN SHAPE/BORDER

Moles need checking if they change in shape and develop an irregular border or a jagged edge.



CHANGE IN COLOUR

Moles should be a single uniform colour and not have varying shades of colour. They are usually light brown or mid-brown. Dark black, colour change or variation in colour may suggest melanoma.

INCREASE IN SIZE

Moles should not be larger than 6mm in diameter. You should see your doctor if any mole grows in size or develops other abnormal features.