Moles

Many people have moles. Moles can look very different from one another. Some are flat and some are raised. The color of moles varies from skin-colored to dark brown. Some children are born with moles (congenital moles). Some moles appear as you grow older. The number of moles one has increases during childhood and adolescence. Then they begin to decrease in mid-adulthood. Most moles cause few problems.

If any of the following changes occur to your mole, you should see your dermatologist.

- Change in symmetry – One half of the mole does not match the other half.
- Change in the border of the mole – Is it ragged, blurred, or irregular?
- Change in color – It is red, blue, white, or black, and it is getting darker or lighter.
- Change in the diameter – Is it larger than a pencil eraser or growing out of proportion to the child’s growth?
- Development of a bump within the mole – Some moles will gradually become more raised over time.

If a mole has changed, your doctor may do a biopsy. A biopsy involves numbing the mole with medicine and then removing part of it. The procedure can be done in a few minutes while you are in the office. There is a small amount of discomfort. You can return to normal activities shortly afterwards. Keep the biopsy site clean with soap and water. Apply Vaseline® ointment or a double antibiotic ointment (Polysporin®). Cover the site with a Band-Aid®.

Your doctor may determine that a mole needs to be completely removed by a circular incision. It can be done in the office. It may take 30-40 minutes. Your activities will be restricted for 2 weeks. Keep the excision site clean with soap and water. Apply the recommended antibiotic ointment twice a day. Cover the site with a Band-Aid®. If there are stitches, they may need to be removed in 7 to 14 days, depending on the location.

**Tips for sun protection:**

Daily sun protection is the best thing you can do to decrease the chance of getting more moles.

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with UVA and UVB coverage and a SPF of 30. Look for ingredients like “zinc oxide”, “titanium dioxide” or “Parsol 1789” for the best protection. Sunscreen should be worn on sunny days, cloudy days and even in the winter. UVA (sun) rays do come through clouds and window glass. Sunscreen should be applied 20 – 30 minutes before going outdoors and every 2 – 3 hours thereafter during prolonged sun exposure or after swimming and heavy sweating.
- Wear a broad-brimmed hat.
• Wear sunglasses.
• Wear protective clothing including a shirt and pants. Clothing in dark colors and with tight weave provides the greatest protection. There are many brands of sun protective clothing now available.
• Avoid sun exposure during the hours of 10 am to 4 pm as much as possible.
• Seek shade whenever possible.

Call your doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:
• You notice a change in your moles.
• You have questions or concerns about your moles.
• You notice redness, swelling or drainage at the site of a biopsy or excision.