

## Know your moles

Many patients ask about moles and how to have them removed. Most don't like the look of them, but some are concerned about changes in their moles. We asked Consultant Plastic Surgeon Mr Matt Venus, about moles and how they are removed.

### What is a mole?

Melanocytes are cells that produce a colouring/pigment for the skin. Usually the melanocytes are scattered amongst the upper layer of the skin. However, if there is a change in the amount of pigment produced, the number of melanocytes or the distribution of them, then different coloured skin lesions result. Moles develop where melanocytes group together in nests.

### What types of moles are there?

The medical name for moles is 'acquired melanocytic naevocellular naevus', but 'mole' is easier to remember! They represent a collection of melanocytes in the skin.

Most people want moles removed for aesthetic reasons, however, we sometimes advise a mole is removed if it is changing in a worrying way.

### Do all moles need to be removed?

No, most moles are benign and are removed solely for cosmetic reasons. However, if a mole is changing in a worrying way, it is better to remove it.

### What are the signs of a malignant mole?

An easy way to remember the signs of a concerning change in a mole is the 'ABCDE rule'.

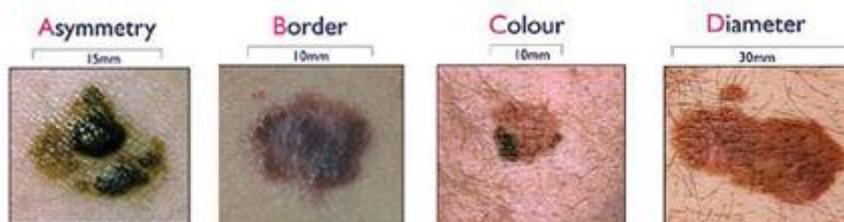
A –Asymmetry (one half of the mole is different from the other)

B –Border (the border is irregular)

C- Colour variability (varying shades of pigment –more than one colour)

D- Diameter greater than 6mm (but melanomas can be smaller than this)

E – Evolution (a changing mole)



A new mole that is changing may also be a cause for concern.

**What happens if I what a mole removed?**

Most moles can be easily removed under local anaesthetic. If there is no concern over the mole and it protrudes from the skin, it can also be shaved flat to the skin to make it less noticeable (Fig 4).

A mole is removed using a technique called elliptical excision. The ellipse is often designed so that the resulting scar runs parallel with an existing skin crease. This allows it to heal flat and be less noticeable to the eye.

**What should I do if I want to have a mole removed?**

At the Stratford Clinic we run a 'see-and-treat' clinic for patients interested in having moles removed. You can see our plastic surgeon and have your mole treated in one visit, to maximise convenience and reduce worry.

To make an appointment with Mr Matt Venus contact The Stratford Clinic

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