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Common Types of Skin Cancers of the Feet

Who would think you could get cancer of the feet? Well, you can and according to the "T.V. Doctor Guru," Dr. Oz, we should all be checking our feet regularly for any abnormal growths or discolorations. Skin Cancers of the feet are more often related to viruses, exposure to chemicals, chronic inflammation or irritation, or inherited traits. Unfortunately, the skin of the feet is often overlooked during routine medical examinations, and for that reason, it is important that the feet are checked regularly for abnormalities which might be indicative of evolving skin cancer.

Common Types of Skin Cancer of the Feet:

Skin cancers of the feet have several features in common. Most are painless, and often there is a history of recurrent cracking, bleeding, or ulceration. Frequently individuals discover their skin cancer after unrelated ailments near the affected site. Some of the most common cancers of the lower extremity are: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and malignant melanoma.

Basal Cell Carcinoma frequently is seen on sun-exposed surfaces. This form of cancer is one of the least aggressive cancers in the body. It will cause local damage, but only rarely spreads beyond the skin. Basal cell cancers may appear as pearly white bumps or patches which ooze or crust similar in appearance to an open sore. On the skin of the lower legs and feet, basal cell cancers often resemble non-cancerous skin tumors or benign ulcers.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma is the most common form of cancer on the skin of the feet. Most types of early squamous cell carcinoma are confined to the skin and do not spread. However, when advanced, some can become aggressive and spread throughout the body. This form of cancer often begins as a small scaly bump or plaque which may appear inflamed. Sometimes there is a history of recurrent cracking or bleeding. Occasionally, they begin as a hard projecting callus-like lesion. Though squamous cell cancer is painless, it may be itchy. Squamous cell cancer may resemble a plantar wart, a fungal infection, eczema, an ulcer, or other common dermatological condition of the foot.

Malignant Melanoma is one of the deadliest skin cancers known. Nonsurgical treatments are rarely effective and many remain experimental. This type of skin cancer must be detected very early to ensure patient survival. Melanomas may occur on the skin of the feet and on occasion beneath a toenail. They are found both on the soles and on the tops of the feet. As a melanoma grows and extends deeper into the skin, it becomes more serious through the lymphatic and blood vessels.

Malignant melanoma has many potential appearances, leading to its nickname, "The Great Masquerader." This skin cancer commonly begins as a small brown-black spot or bump; however, roughly one third of cases will lack brown pigment and thus appear pink or red. These tumors may resemble common moles. Close inspection will usually demonstrate asymmetry, irregular borders, alterations in color, and/or a diameter of greater than 6mm. (approximately 1/4 inch). Melanomas may resemble benign moles, blood blisters, ingrown nails, plantar warts, ulcers caused by poor circulation, foreign bodies or bruises.

If any irregularities as mentioned above should occur on self examination, do not waste time, but immediately see a trained podiatrist who is a specialist in diagnosing skin cancers of the feet. Your podiatrist will investigate the possibility of skin cancer both through examination and/or skin biopsy. A small skin biopsy is easily obtained and sent to a specialized laboratory where a board-certified dermatopathologist will examine the tissue in greater detail. If a lesion is determined to be malignant, your podiatrist will recommend the best course of treatment for your condition.

Information for this article was from APMA Podiatrist Flyer, Skin Cancers of the Feet, BaKo podiatric Pathology Services www.bakopathology.com. Take care of your feet. They support you.



Happy feet to you, Your Parish Nurse.

To contact Holy Family Parish Nurse Ministry call 330-688-6412 ext. 462 or view at www.holyfamilystow.org.