



NEWS RELEASE

HOW TO CHECK YOUR NAILS FOR MELANOMA

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month

ROSEMONT, Ill. (May 11, 2021) — When checking the body for signs of skin cancer, many people may only think to check their skin. However, board-certified dermatologists from the American Academy of Dermatology say it's important to check the nails, too. Although rare, skin cancer, including melanoma — one of the deadliest forms of skin cancer — can develop under and around the fingernails and toenails. While anyone can develop melanoma on their nails, it's more common in older individuals and people with skin of color. A personal or family history of melanoma or previous nail trauma may also be risk factors.

"The good news is that when found early, melanoma — even on the nails — is highly treatable," says board-certified dermatologist Skylar Souyoul, MD, FAAD. "The best way to find skin cancer on your nails early, when it's most treatable, is to know what to look for and regularly check your nails."

When checking your nails for melanoma, Dr. Souyoul says to look for the following changes:

1. **A dark streak.** This may look like a brown or black band in the nail — often on the thumb or big toe of your dominant hand or foot. However, this dark streak can show up on any nail.
2. **Dark skin next to your nail.** When the skin around your nail becomes darker, it could be a sign of advanced melanoma.
3. **Nail lifting from your fingers or toes.** When this happens, your nail starts to separate from the nail bed. The white free edge at the top of your nail will start to look longer as the nail lifts.
4. **Nail splitting,** which occurs when a nail splits down the middle.
5. **A bump or nodule under your nails.** You might also see a band of color on your nail. It could be wide and irregular or dark and narrow.

"Nail melanoma is often diagnosed at a more advanced stage than melanoma on the skin, making it more dangerous for your health," says Dr. Souyoul. "If you notice any changes to your nails, including a new dark band on your nail, make an appointment to see a board-certified dermatologist."

These tips are demonstrated in "How to Check Your Nails for Melanoma," a video posted to the AAD website and [YouTube channel](#). This video is part of the AAD's "Video of the Month" series, which offers tips people can use to properly care for their skin, hair and nails.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S., and nearly 20 Americans die from melanoma every day. In recognition of Skin Cancer Awareness Month, the AAD is encouraging Americans to [#PracticeSafeSun](#) to protect themselves and their families from skin cancer. The public can help raise awareness of skin cancer by using the hashtag [#PracticeSafeSun](#) when sharing AAD resources on skin cancer prevention and detection. Additionally, individuals who have been affected by skin cancer can share their personal stories on [SpotSkinCancer.org](#) to provide support and inspiration for others fighting skin cancer.

CORRESPONDENCE

PO Box 1968
Des Plaines, IL 60017-1968

EMAIL: mediarelations@aad.org
WEB: aad.org

ROSEMONT, IL OFFICE

9500 W Bryn Mawr Avenue, Suite 500
Rosemont, IL 60018-5216

MAIN: (847) 330-0230
FAX: (847) 240-1859

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE

1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 540
Washington, DC 20004-2401

MAIN: (202) 842-3555
FAX: (202) 842-4355

To find a board-certified dermatologist in your area, visit aad.org/findaderm.

#

Contact

Nicole Dobkin, (847) 240-1746, ndobkin@aad.org

Julie Landmesser, (847) 240-1714, jlandmesser@aad.org

More Information

[Patient Story: Stopping Skin Cancer Spread in the Nick of Time](#)

[Skin Cancer Resource Center](#)

[Skin Cancer in People of Color](#)

[Skin Cancer Fact Sheet](#)

[Melanoma FAQs](#)

About the AAD

Headquartered in Rosemont, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology, founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 20,000 physicians worldwide, the AAD is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the AAD at (888) 462-DERM (3376) or aad.org. Follow the AAD on [Facebook](#) (American Academy of Dermatology), [Twitter](#) (@AADskin), [Instagram](#) (@AADskin1), or [YouTube](#) (AcademyofDermatology).

Editor's note: The AAD does not promote or endorse any products or services. This content is intended as editorial content and should not be embedded with any paid, sponsored or advertorial content as it could be perceived as an AAD endorsement.