

The Basics

What causes skin cancer of the lower extremities?

We often view the sun's harmful rays as the primary cause of skin cancer, but this does not always hold true for cancers of the lower extremities. These are more often related to viruses, exposure to chemicals, chronic inflammation/irritation, or inherited traits.

What can you do?

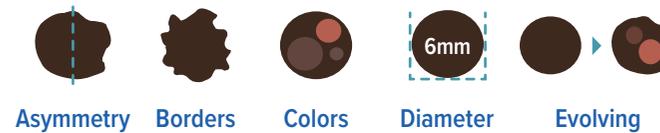
Early detection and treatment may save your life. Skin cancer of the lower extremity can appear in varied shapes, sizes, and colors. It can be on the skin or under the nails. It is important to familiarize yourself with the early warning signs of cancerous lesions. General tips to recognize these signs can be found on the back page under "Spot Melanoma Early." If you are concerned with an area on your lower extremities, take the first step by asking your podiatrist for an evaluation for a definitive diagnosis.

What can your podiatrist do?

Your podiatrist is trained as a lower extremity specialist and can evaluate and treat abnormal skin conditions of the legs and feet. Investigating the possibility of skin cancer begins with a thorough clinical examination, and may be followed by a skin biopsy. A skin biopsy is a simple procedure in which a small sample of the skin lesion is obtained and sent to a specialized laboratory for diagnostic testing. Based on the results of the testing, your podiatrist will recommend the best course of action.

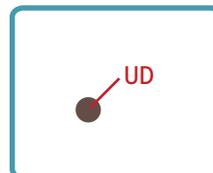
Spot Melanoma Early

Know the ABCDE's of Melanoma

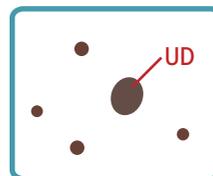


Watch for the "Ugly Duckling"

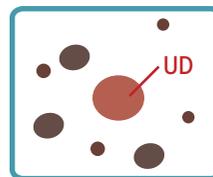
The "Ugly Duckling" concept refers to checking the skin for any moles or lesions that appear "different." This could have several applications. For instance, moles on the body often resemble each other, but an ugly duckling would be one that stands out from the others in appearance. It could also be a mole or lesion that has changed over time and now seems to be an outlier. Or it could simply be a new lesion in an area that you have never seen any before. See examples below:



A new or changing lesion in an area with few to no moles or lesions.



A lesion darker and/or larger than the surrounding moles.

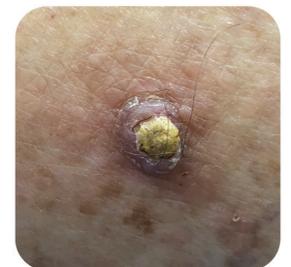


A larger and brighter lesion in the background of many small dark moles.

Early detection and treatment could save your life.

Skin Cancers of the Lower Extremity

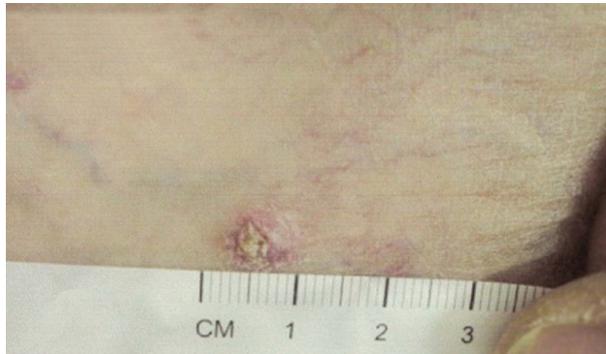
Ask your podiatrist for an evaluation today



Common Skin Cancers of the Lower Extremity

Skin cancers of the lower extremities have several features in common. Most are painless, and often there is a history of recurrent cracking, bleeding or ulceration. They are usually discovered after unrelated ailments occur near the affected site.

BASAL CELL CARCINOMA



Basal cell carcinoma is frequently seen on sun-exposed skin surfaces. With feet being significantly less exposed to the sun, it occurs there less frequently. This form of skin carcinoma is one of the least aggressive cancers in the body. It may cause destruction to surrounding soft tissue, but only rarely spreads beyond the skin.

Basal cell carcinoma may appear as pearly-white waxy bumps or patches, that may ooze or crust similar in appearance to an open sore. On the skin of the lower legs and feet, basal cell carcinoma often resembles non-cancerous skin tumors or benign ulcers.

SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA



Squamous cell carcinoma is the most common form of cancer on the skin of the feet. Early cases are confined to the skin, however, when advanced, can become more aggressive and spread throughout the body.

It often begins as a small scaly bump or plaque that may appear inflamed. Occasionally, they begin as a hard projecting callus-like lesion. There could also be recurrent cracking or bleeding. Though squamous cell carcinoma is painless, it may be itchy. It may resemble a plantar wart, a fungal infection, eczema, an ulcer, or other common dermatological foot condition.

MELANOMA



Melanoma is one of the deadliest skin cancers and must be detected early to ensure patient survival. It may occur on the skin of the feet (tops or soles) or beneath a toenail. As a melanoma grows deeper into the skin, it becomes more serious and may spread through the body.

Melanoma has many potential appearances. It commonly begins as a small brown-black spot or bump; however, some cases will lack brown pigment and thus appear pink or red. These tumors may resemble benign moles, plantar warts, blood blisters, ingrown nails, ulcers caused by poor circulation, foreign bodies, or bruises.

**See Back Page for
How to Spot a Melanoma**