

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid

The Renaissance is credited with transforming the humble facial mole (and its likeness rendered through makeup) to the status of beauty mark.

Q. I have a mole on my genitals. Can it be cancerous even if my gynecologist says it has a normal size, color and shape?

A. By having a health care provider examine your mole, you have already taken one of the most important steps in protecting your health. Your gynecologist will be able to let you know if there is any cause for concern, and can refer you to a dermatologist if things don't look right. Moles on or around the genitals are common in both men and women, but are usually harmless and require no treatment.

As you mention, size, color and shape all play a part in identifying moles that might pose a problem. If the mole grows, changes color or bleeds, take that as a warning sign and make an appointment with a health care provider right away. Since you'll be seeing your gynecologist annually for Pap exams, he or she can make a mole check-up part of your visit.

Between appointments, use the "ABCD" method to look for warning signs of melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer:

- **A is for asymmetrical shape.** Look for moles with irregular shapes, such as two very different-looking halves.
- **B is for irregular border.** Look for moles with irregular, notched or scalloped borders.
- **C is for changes in color.** Look for growths that have a variety of colors (tan, brown, black, red or blue) or an uneven distribution of color.
- **D is for diameter.** Look for growths that are larger than about 1/4 inch (about the size of a pencil eraser)

Campus Health will be offering a free skin cancer screening on Friday, April 20th in room D304 of the Highland Commons Building from 11:00am-1:00pm on a first come, first serve basis. For more information on skin cancer go to www.skincancer.org.

Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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