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Skin Self-Exams

Checking your skin for skin cancer only requires your eyes and a mirror. Involving a partner adds another set of eyes, which is especially helpful when checking the back and other hard-to-see areas. Examining your skin only takes a few minutes, but it could save your life.

Current estimates show that one in five North Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime, so it is important to be familiar with your skin, especially your moles.

How to check for skin cancer:

- Raise your arms and examine the right and left sides of your body.
- Then bend your elbows and look carefully at your forearms, upper underarms, and palms.
- Next, examine the backs of your legs, spaces between your toes and the soles of your feet.
- Finally, examine hard-to-see areas such as your back, buttocks, and top of your head.
 - Use a mirror to inspect the back of your neck and scalp, parting your hair for a better view

What to look for:

- **Asymmetry:** One half of the spot is unlike the other half.
- **Border:** The spot has an irregular, scalloped, or poorly defined border.
- **Colour:** The spot has varying colours from one area to the next, such as shades of tan, brown, or black, or with areas of white, red, or blue.
- **Diameter:** Melanomas are usually greater than 6mm, or about the size of a pencil eraser, when they are diagnosed. However, they can be smaller.
- **Evolving:** A mole or spot on the skin that looks different than the rest or is changing in size, shape, or colour.

Aggressive skin cancer features:

Keep an eye out for the following!

- **Elevated:** You can see or feel the lesion sticking out.
- **Firm:** The spot is firm or hard as opposed to soft.
- **Growing in Size:** The spot is growing. Ex. doubling in size in a month.