



ONE GOAL: DISCOVER THE CURE

A WORLD WITHOUT MELANOMA

PEDIATRIC MELANOMA

Melanoma is a highly malignant and rapidly spreading type of skin cancer that begins in the melanocytes, the cells that make the pigment melanin, which gives our skin its color. Approximately 400 children are diagnosed with melanoma each year.

Pediatric melanoma has increased on average 2% per year since 1973. The biggest increase in recent decades has been in girls ages 15-19, possibly because girls are more likely than boys to sunbathe and use tanning beds.

Childhood Melanoma Risk Factors

Although the exact cause of pediatric melanoma is not known, certain attributes, characteristics, and exposures make it more likely that a child will develop this type of cancer. These risk factors include:

- Giant melanocytic nevi
- Prolonged exposure to sunlight, though less of a factor in children than adults.
- Red or blond hair, blue eyes, freckles
- A tendency to sunburn and not tan
- A large number of moles
- A family history of melanoma
- Immunosuppression, immunodeficiency
- History of retinoblastoma
- Certain inherited disorders including xeroderma pigmentosum and Werner syndrome

Not everyone with risk factors develops melanoma. However, if your child has risk factors, you should discuss them with a physician.

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