

## Spotting Skin Conditions

John Otrompke

Being aware of the first signs of skin conditions will help you know when it's time to visit a doctor. Here is a short refresher on five of the most important signs you might see.

### 1. Butterfly Rash

This is a facial rash characterized by its shape: the middle part of the butterfly is on the bridge of the nose, with "wings" extending onto the cheeks. "It can signify a range of diseases, from milder conditions like rosacea, significant acne, eczema, and psoriasis, all the way to serious autoimmune connective tissue disorders such as lupus," says Joseph Jorizzo, MD, professor and founding chair of the dermatology department at the Wake Forest University School of

Both viral and bacterial infections may appear as pustules, or tender lesions. They can sometimes look like acne, but may also be bigger or more isolated than a pimple, Weinstein says.

### 3. Patchy Hair

Be alert for round, patchy areas of hair loss, which can be a sign of an autoimmune disease called alopecia areata, Jorizzo says. "Alopecia is associated with thyroid disease, but it can also be upsetting to the patient in and of itself," Jorizzo explains. "Prognosis is very good if there is just one little circle, but if they lose their eyebrows or eyelashes, or if it goes around the bottom of the scalp, the condition is likely to be more chronic."



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### 2. Infections

"Look for any sign of infection, such as a cold sore, which is characterized by a painful bump or blister on the face or nose," says Jill Weinstein, MD, clinical instructor of dermatology at Northwestern University in Chicago. "This may be caused by herpes simplex."

### 4. Symptoms on the Nails

Nails may also offer evidence of a medical condition. "Signs on the nails include a condition called clubbing, where there's body under the cuticle that changes the angle of the nail, so that it's like an upside down V," Jorizzo says. Clubbing is sometimes accompanied by

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*"What you seem to be, be really."*

-Benjamin Franklin

### Office Hours and Contact

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edema, and the cuticle area may feel wet. It can be a symptom of several lung conditions, ranging from chronic bronchitis to lung cancer.

Pits in the nails can be a sign of arthritis or psoriasis. Pits resemble a mere dent, perhaps 1 millimeter across. Jorizzo explains, "In psoriasis, the outer layers of skin turn over very quickly, and when they come from under the cuticle, little patches fall off, so you get a pit."

Finally, a single dark black streak in the nail that comes up on to the cuticle can be a sign of melanoma.

## 5. Skin Cancer

The most common source of skin cancer deaths is melanoma, which may be identified using the ABCDE criteria:

**Asymmetry.** The mole is an unusual shape, not round.

**Border Irregularity.** The edges of the mole may be jagged, scalloped, or wavy, or very sharp in one area.

**Color.** The mole shows variation in color from one area to another. There may be multiple shades of tan, brown, black, white, blue, or red.

**Diameter.** The mole is greater than 6 millimeters in diameter.

**Evolving.** The mole is new, or an existing mole has changed in size, shape, or color.

A more informal method of spotting a suspicious mole is called the Ugly Duckling Test: when a mole just seems to catch your attention for some reason. "The classic example is when someone has one thing on them that just doesn't look like any other spot on their body," explains Elizabeth Quigley, MD, a physician in the dermatology service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New Jersey. "Let's say they have many black moles, but one brown mole. Or most of their moles are round and small, but they have one that is big and a different shape. That should be evaluated by a physician."

The most common form of skin cancer is basal cell carcinoma. There are also some less common varieties that have different symptoms. "Basal cell carcinoma often presents in the form of shiny or pearly bumps, which patients think are pimples," says Quigley. If the lesion has been there for six months, and sometimes bleeds, that's a warning sign that it is not a pimple. Squamous cell carcinoma, responsible

for about 20 percent of all skin cancer deaths, has symptoms that are quite different from those of melanoma. "Squamous cell carcinoma can present as firm bumps, scaly patches, or ulcers that don't get better. The skin is red and the scale is the kind that doesn't go away with moisturizer," Quigley says. "It's different from just dry skin, and the scale is usually thicker." She says squamous cells don't rub off like normal dry skin, and the scaly patch may bleed if it is removed by pulling or picking.

Keep in mind that these are only guidelines, and you should have any concerns checked out by a qualified health-care professional. Knowing the warning signs can be valuable, but nothing replaces a doctor's expertise.

*John Otrompke is a health-care writer and consultant.*



**A possible skin cancer mole.**

# Elimination Effect

## Clear Skin Depends on Internal Wellness

Shelley Burns, N.D.

Do you often wonder why a skin blemish has not resolved or why acne outbreaks continue in spite of countless therapies? If so, you may need to dig a bit deeper and look inside--inside your body, that is. Good digestive health and the health of your colon can mean healthy skin.

### THE QUESTION IS, HOW?

Both the colon and skin are responsible for absorbing and releasing chemicals, water, and other metabolic products. The colon is the largest internal organ in the body. Its function is specifically to absorb food, nutrients, and water.

One function of skin is to help the body breathe. It inhales and exhales similar to how the lungs work. Inhalation and exhalation by the skin allows it to open pores and perspire. So, sweating is a good thing.

When the colon is unable to get rid of waste produced from food, the colon becomes constipated and toxic. The skin also becomes toxic in trying to perform

the elimination function, and often results in skin eruptions in the form of acne, eczema, and psoriasis.

### PREVENTION

You can avoid some of this trouble with these tips:

- Consider removing certain foods from your diet--especially dairy. An allergy to milk and other dairy products can cause severe acne.
- Drink at least 64-80 ounces of water every day, as it lubricates the colon and helps with regularity.
- Refrain from dehydrating beverages like alcohol, coffee, and soda, as they can cause constipation.
- Strive for a daily bowel movement--try 1-3 teaspoons of ground flax seeds added to your breakfast.

Beautiful skin starts from the inside out. Adopting these practices will not only improve colon and skin health, but will promote your overall health as well.



Water intake can clarify skin.

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# Identifying a Stroke

## Do You Know the Warning Signs?

Nearly 800,000 Americans have strokes every year. However, studies show most Americans don't know how to recognize five established warning signs that indicate when someone is having a stroke.

A stroke is when a blood vessel carrying blood to the brain either bursts or is blocked by a clot, thus depriving the brain of oxygen. According to the American Stroke Association, more than 137,000 people die each year from stroke--on average, that's one person every four minutes. Risk factors include age and heredity, as well as artery disease, diabetes, high cholesterol or blood pressure, physical inactivity, obesity, and smoking,

### Five Warning Signs

The best treatment for stroke is the drug

"tissue plasminogen activator" (tPA), but it must be administered within three hours from the first symptoms of the stroke to be most effective. To help ensure the quick recognition of a stroke, familiarize yourself with these five established warning signs:

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, usually on one side of the body.
- Sudden trouble walking and loss of balance.
- Sudden confusion and difficulty speaking.
- Severe headache with no obvious cause.
- Vision troubles from one or both

eyes.

Someone suffering a stroke may not show all five symptoms simultaneously, but if any of these conditions are present, seek emergency medical assistance immediately. Call 9-1-1 and also record the time that the symptoms first presented. Being aware of the warning signs and being prepared to respond to them quickly could be the difference between life and death for you or someone you love.

*"The world  
reflects what you  
need to see, not  
only what you  
want to see."*

-Author Unknown

Joy to the world.....during this holiday season! Need a reason to be happy, just smile and somebody will smile back:) Keep bundled up while winter approaches in late December. Please bring a new, unwrapped toy to donate to Toys For Tots to my office before 12-12-2016 when the Marine Reserve Corps will pick them up for distribution. It's been a pleasure to be of service to you over the years! Looking forward to 2017! Best Wishes, Julia

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