

## Name That Spot!

Warmer weather means more time outdoors, which means more sun exposure, which can mean changes to the skin that may require medical attention. With that in mind, here is a quick guide to common skin spots. Contact your medical provider if you have any concerns.

1. Seborrheic Keratoses: raised, rough bumps often with a “stuck-on” appearance and brown in hue; these are benign lesions that do not require treatment but can be removed if bothersome.



2. Actinic Keratoses: dry, scaly, red patches that develop on sun-exposed skin such as the head and arms. These are considered “precancerous” as they can develop into squamous cell carcinoma. They can be easily treated in the clinic.



3. Basal Cell Carcinoma: pink, pearly bumps that commonly occur on the head and neck, but can occur anywhere. These cancerous lesions require surgical removal, as their “roots” can dive surprisingly deep. (Pictured top right.)



4. Squamous Cell Carcinoma: take on multiple forms, but often involve a lesion that repeatedly heals and then reopens. Like basal cells, these cancerous lesions require surgical removal.



5. Melanoma: the most serious form of skin cancer, these dark-colored lesions often form within a pre-existing mole or develop as a new, mole-like spot on the skin. The following indicators help to distinguish melanoma from a simple mole: melanomas tend to be asymmetric with an irregular border and varied color, bigger than a pencil eraser and often change over time.



(Photo Credit: American Academy of Dermatology)

## A Test of Strength

Have you ever wondered about the strength of your bones? Or how, exactly, osteoporosis is diagnosed? To measure the strength of bones and diagnosis osteoporosis, providers use a tool called a Bone Density Scan, sometimes referred to as a DEXA Scan.

Your provider may order a DEXA Scan if you are believed to be at increased risk of osteoporosis for any number of reasons, including the following: advanced age; history of an atypical fracture; history of long-term steroid or hormone treatment; certain medical conditions like hypothyroidism, kidney disease or rheumatoid arthritis.

The DEXA Scan is a special kind of low-dose X-ray that measures the thickness of the bones at specific locations. It is a painless procedure typically performed at a hospital.

The test result gives two values: a T-score, which compares your bone density to that of an average, healthy young adult, as well as a Z-score, which compares your bone density to that of your peers.

Bone density is considered normal if the T-score has a value of -1.0 or higher. A T-score between -1.0 and -2.5 indicates osteopenia, or early bone loss. A T-score below -2.5 indicates osteoporosis.

If diagnosed with osteoporosis, several treatment options are available, including both pills and injectable medications. And repeat DEXA Scans can be used to monitor how effectively the treatment is working.

Regardless of T-score or Z-score, everyone should strive to consume at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium every day, along with plenty of vitamin D, to promote healthy bones.

## Resolution Recharge

Three months have already come and gone since New Year's Day, and with those three months, it's likely that some of our New Year's Resolutions have also faded away. However, the warming weather provides a great opportunity for a reboot of a common resolution: exercise!

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that adults aim for 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, as well as strength-building exercises at least twice per week. However, the CDC estimates that only 1 in 5 Americans meets this goal.

Regular physical activity has the obvious benefit of helping to maintain a healthy weight. But many additional benefits of regular activity have also been documented, including: lower blood pressure; lower risk of heart attack and stroke; higher "good cholesterol;" improved mood and mental health; decreased risk of developing diabetes and some cancers; stronger bones and less chance of fractures and falls. All of these factors translate exercise into an increased likelihood of living a longer, healthier and more fulfilling life.

Examples of moderate-intensity physical activity include: yard work, dancing, playing tennis, enjoying a leisurely bike ride, and walking briskly. These types of activities increase your heart rate and quicken your breathing.

Whatever your activity of choice, the important thing is that you find a way to incorporate physical activity into your weekly routine. Exercise is more than a means for shedding those pounds we tend to pack on over the winter months. Exercise is a vital component of wellness, and necessary for us to live our fullest lives.

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