

# Malignant Melanoma



Although less common than some other types of skin cancer, melanoma is the most serious because it is more likely to spread. Once melanoma is diagnosed, your doctor will try to determine if or how far it has spread. This is called staging, and helps determine how serious the cancer is and how best to treat it.

About **106,110** people will be diagnosed with melanoma this year.

Source: American Cancer Society, 2021



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## Staging: How serious is your cancer?

Melanomas can be staged from 0 to IV (4). The higher the number, the more the cancer has spread. Some stages are broken down further using letters. Within a stage, the earlier the letter, the less the cancer has spread.

### Staging is based on these key factors:

- How thick is the main tumor, and how deep has it grown into the skin? As the melanoma becomes thicker, its chances of spreading increase.
- Is the skin over the melanoma ulcerated (or broken down)? Ulcerated melanomas have a greater risk of spreading.

The **risk** of melanoma **increases** as people age. The average age at diagnosis is 65.

Source: American Cancer Society, 2021

## What happens now?

**Have an honest discussion with your doctor. Here are some questions that may help you better understand your status:**

- Has the melanoma spread to other parts of my body?
- Do I need other tests before we decide on a treatment?
- What are my treatment options?
- How quickly do we need to decide on treatment?
- Should I get a second opinion?
- How long will treatment last? What will it be like?
- Who can help me understand costs and insurance coverage for my diagnosis and treatment?

## Treatment options

- Surgical removal
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation therapy
- Surgical removal of lymph nodes

**For more information, including tips on how to protect your skin from additional issues, visit [SpotTheSpot.org](https://SpotTheSpot.org).**

