How does hair removal affect my mole? [1]

Is it dangerous to wax or use a chemical depilatory such as Nair on areas of the skin that have moles? I've seen warnings on some labels regarding this. What could happen to the moles?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Moles are small areas of the skin with a high concentration of melanocytes, the skin cells that produce melanin, or pigment. (Moles are also a type of rodent, but that?s for another entry). Moles sometimes are flat and sometimes are raised. Sometimes, they grow hair. For the most part, waxing, tweezing, shaving, or using chemical depilatories [2] on moles is fine and should not cause problems, but you should always read labels on depilatories to be absolutely certain.

Moles occur on about 1-2 percent of newborns. Most people acquire moles throughout their lives and they evolve and grow as people do. Most moles start out as flat and small, like a freckle. Over time, they can grow larger, become raised, and/or sprout hairs. Generally, they are harmless but they can become cancerous and some types of moles carry a greater risk of becoming cancerous than others. One type is the dysplastic nevus, a mole that tends to be asymmetrical, irregular in shape and color, and larger than other moles. They have a greater chance of a developing into melanoma, a severe form of skin cancer. With most moles, it is a good idea to keep them out of the sun or put sunscreen on them to protect them from UV rays. But the good news is that sun is really the only factor that might cause a mole to become cancerous. Although shaving, waxing, or applying chemicals may cause inflammation or irritation, these activities won?t increase the risk of cancer. Shaving a mole off can be painful and may bleed a bit more, but it won?t cause any permanent damage. Also, the mole will grow back. Electrolysis and laser hair removal are also safe to do on moles.

Depilatories, such as Nair, vary somewhat in their chemical composition and in the areas for which they are intended. They work by breaking down and dissolving the structure of the hair so that it separates easily from the skin. Some are made for less sensitive areas such as the legs, while others may be used for more sensitive areas such as the face or bikini line. Depilatories should not be used on skin that is already irritated. One of the reasons that depilatories can cause irritation is that hair and skin have a lot in common ? both are made of the protein keratin. So, a substance that breaks down hair will also potentially irritate skin. Mole skin may be slightly easier to irritate than non-mole skin. So if you are worried about the extra inflammation or irritation, use a bit of depilatory for sensitive skin areas on a mole. If it becomes irritated, it may be wise to avoid moles when applying your depilatories. Even if hair removal or irritating the mole won?t cause cancer, it may still feel unpleasant or appear
unsightly while it is healing.

In general, it is a good idea to keep an eye on moles and, if you notice one changing in shape, color, or size, visit your health care provider.

Happy hair removal,

Alice!

Related questions

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