

Dermatology and Plastic Surgery

Lentigo Maligna

What is Lentigo Maligna?

Lentigo Maligna is a type of melanoma insitu, which is the very earliest stage of a skin cancer called melanoma. Insitu means the cancer cells have not spread anywhere else in the body and have remained in the top layer of skin. This may also be called a pre-cancerous condition. Lentigo Maligna is normally slow growing and can take many years to develop. It is common in areas which have had a lot of sun exposure such as the face and upper body.

Although Lentigo Maligna is pre-cancerous, if left untreated it can develop into a more invasive melanoma. We have more information about melanoma if you require it.

What does it look like?

Lentigo can appear as a growing patch of skin that can be a variety of colours such as brown and black.

How is it diagnosed?

Most people will see their GP who will refer them urgently to a skin specialist called a dermatologist at the hospital for diagnosis and treatment. A biopsy will be recommended to confirm this. A biopsy is a removal of a small sample of skin.

Alternatively, the dermatologist may decide that the entire lesion needs to be removed; this is called an excision biopsy. For both procedures, a local anaesthetic will be given and once the procedure is complete, the sample of skin will be sent for analysis.



Patient Information

How is it treated?

Once Lentigo Maligna has been confirmed, it can be treated and cured by a further surgical procedure called an excision. This enables the doctor to remove the tumour and a rim of surrounding normal skin, ensuring all the pre-cancerous cells have been removed. In most cases this will be removed under a local anaesthetic. Stitches will be used to close the wound and a dressing placed on top. Instructions about when to have these removed will be given to you by the doctor/ nurse at the time of the procedure.

Occasionally the tumour may need to be removed by a plastic surgeon. If it is large, or in an awkward place, it will need to be removed under a general anaesthetic and require a skin graft. This will be discussed with you before any operation, so that you are aware of the procedure you will be having.

If surgery is not an option, other treatments may be offered, such as cryotherapy (freezing), creams and radiotherapy.

Follow up

As Lentigo Maligna is a pre-cancerous condition, which can be cured by surgery, no medical follow up is necessary. However, although these pre-cancerous cells are unlikely to come back, there is a small risk they can return and therefore, we will invite you to attend an education appointment with the skin cancer nursing team to show and advise you to check your operation site monthly for any skin changes as well as the rest of the skin. Following this you will be discharged, but if you do notice any changes, please report them to your GP who can refer you back to the Dermatology Department if required. The skin cancer nurses are available for advice if you are unsure what to do.

Helping yourself

- Examine the area of your Lentigo Maligna and report any skin changes.
- Systematically look and feel for any changes in your skin. Ask someone you feel comfortable with to examine your back, neck, ears, or scalp. Alternatively, a mirror can be used to examine these areas.
- Wear protective clothing and wide brimmed hats when outdoors. These will protect the skin areas most at risk.

Patient Information

- Wear 100% U.V protective sunglasses to protect the as the skin around the eyes.
- Avoid sunshine between the hours of 11.00am and 3.00pm.
- High factor sunscreens (SPF30+) are vital. Apply them before going out in the sun and re-apply every two to three hours, or more often if perspiring or swimming.

Further Information

If you need any clarification or more information, please contact the Macmillan Skin Cancer Nurse Specialists based at UHCW on **024 7696 6085** or **024 7696 4000 bleep 4316**, or at George Elliot hospital on **02476 865455**.

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