US, Real Risk, Pesticides in Florida

Pesticides and Skin Cancer

Research shows a strong link between **certain pesticides and a higher risk of melanoma**—the deadliest form of skin cancer—as well as other non-melanoma skin cancers.

- **Not just sunlight**: Pesticide exposure is considered a *non-solar risk factor* for melanoma. It may act independently or amplify the effects of sun exposure.
- **Warning sign**: While pesticides don't directly cause harmless moles, a *new* or *changing* mole could be an early sign of melanoma.

Spotting Melanoma: The ABCDE Rule

Dermatologists use these five criteria to identify suspicious spots:

- **A – Asymmetry**: One half doesn't match the other.
- **B – Border**: Irregular or blurred edges.
- **C – Color**: Multiple shades (brown, black, tan).
- **D – Diameter**: Larger than 6 mm (pencil eraser).
- **E – Evolving**: Changing in size, shape, or color.

How Pesticides Raise Risk

Studies of agricultural workers highlight several possible pathways:

- **Carcinogenic agents**: Some pesticides contain or break down into carcinogens, like arsenic.
- **DNA damage**: Certain solvents and chemicals can directly harm skin cell DNA.
- **Sun interaction**: Combined pesticide and UV exposure increases melanoma risk.
- **Cell changes**: Pesticides may disrupt melanocytes, promoting abnormal cell growth (dysplasia).

Other Skin Effects from Pesticides

- **Irritant dermatitis**: Redness, blisters, lesions (most common).
- **Allergic contact dermatitis**: Rash triggered by repeated exposure.
- **General irritation**: Burning, itching, or inflammation.

What You Can Do

- **Self-checks**: Examine your skin monthly for new or changing spots.

- **Professional care**: If you notice suspicious changes, see a dermatologist promptly.
- **Risk awareness**: If you live in Florida or another high-exposure area (agriculture, landscaping, pest control), your vigilance is especially important.

⚠ **Bottom line:** Sun exposure isn’t the only threat in Florida. Long-term or high pesticide exposure can increase your risk of skin cancer—especially melanoma. Early detection saves lives.
