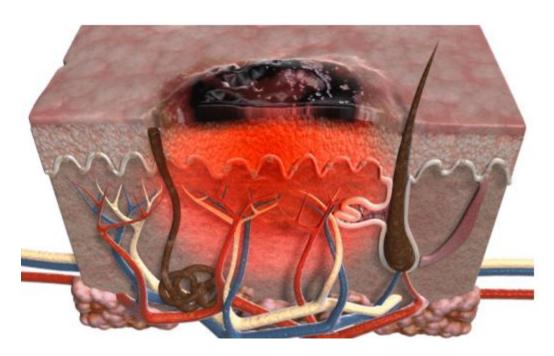


## Can You Wash Off Melanoma?

## **Dermatologist Answers**



Here's the final answer to "Can you wash off melanoma?" given by a doctor.

I asked Gary Goldenberg, MD, of Goldenberg Dermatology, if it was possible to wash off any part of a melanoma. Dr. Goldenberg is assistant professor, dermatology and pathology, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, medical director of the Dermatology Faculty Practice, NY.

Here is what he explains: "Absolutely not! Melanoma is a malignant cancer of skin cells that make pigments (melanocytes). Depending on when it's found, melanoma can be in the top layer of the skin called the epidermis (melanoma in situ) or spread down into the deeper levels of the skin (malignant melanoma). The deeper the lesion, the higher the chance of spreading to other organs and death from the disease."

The reason you cannot wash off a melanoma, no matter how hard the water against your skin, no matter how vigorously you rub a sponge on it, scrub with a brush or with a loofah brush, is because the cancer cells are tough and solidly affixed to and into the skin, even if the melanoma is in situ or a very thin layer of cells.

In fact, when's the last time you were able to wash off a common mole? If you believe you've actually done this...then what you washed off was not a mole, but something that looked like it, most likely a benign skin barnacle (seborrheic keratosis). It was probably already loose, and you most likely vigorously rubbed over it. These can look like moles. They can also look like melanoma, but are harmless.