

'Real Housewives of Orange County' star Tamra Judge reveals she has melanoma

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Yahoo Beauty August 28, 2017



Real Housewives of Orange County star Tamra Judge regularly posts pictures of herself on Instagram, so a recent mirror selfie she shared didn't seem out of the ordinary — until you read the caption.

In it, Judge talks about how she's worked hard to have a great butt, before getting serious. "Im showing you this picture because this is what melanoma looks like," she wrote. "I don't want sympathy, I want you to save YOUR ASS and get your skin checked." Judge, 49, points out a "small black flat freckle" on her rear that is a melanoma, adding, "I had no idea!" before thanking her dermatologist.

"I've been a little sad , worried and pissed off. But we caught it early and that makes me happy," she wrote before adding the hashtags #awareness and #skincheck.



More than 87,100 new cases of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year, according to the American Cancer Society, and about 9,730 people are expected to die of the disease in 2017.

Melanomas commonly appear on a person's trunk, back, legs, neck, and face, the American Cancer Society says, but they can show up anywhere on a person's body. "Melanoma on the buttocks isn't common, but I have seen many in my practice," **Gary Goldenberg, MD**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, tells Yahoo Beauty. "This is especially true in patients who sunbathe nude or use tanning beds."

Genetics and skin type can play a role in how likely a person is to develop melanoma. People with fair skin, for example, have a much greater risk of developing melanoma than those with darker skin, per the American Cancer Society. Obviously, you can't control your genetics and skin color, but you can control other risk factors, such as sun exposure, which is why Goldenberg recommends regularly wearing sunscreen of at least SPF 30, seeking shade, and wearing sun protective clothing when you're outside. He also recommends getting an annual skin check from your dermatologist to check for abnormal moles or lesions.

When you get a skin check, make sure your doctor examines your entire body. "This includes buttocks and groin area as well as between the toes," Goldenberg says. "It's also important not to have your fingernails and toenails painted so that those areas can be checked."

Melanoma is a progressive disease and often people are fine if it's caught and removed early, which is why those annual skin checks are so important. If it's been a while since you've had your moles looked at, call your doctor and make an appointment — it could save your life.