

Health | August 24, 2018 | By Korin Miller

Related Condition Centers [Skin Cancer](#) | [Cancer](#)

'DWTS' Star Whitney Carson's Foot Discoloration Turned Out to Be Melanoma

"There were pools of blood everywhere!"



Moles are really common, and they come in a variety of shapes and colors. So it's understandable that you wouldn't think much of having a reddish mole on your body. It didn't worry *Dancing with the Stars* pro Whitney Carson—in an essay for Yahoo, she said she was surprised when her doctor flagged a red spot on her body as suspicious, even though she has a family history of skin cancer.

Carson, 24, said she was shocked when her doctor found a "small strawberry-colored mole" on the top of her foot. She was even more surprised when the biopsy results came back positive for melanoma.

Melanomas only make up 1 percent of all skin cancers, but they're the most deadly form of skin cancer, the American Cancer Society (ACS) says. Carson was just 22 at the time of her diagnosis and said that she "didn't realize how serious melanoma was until the doctor told me if I had waited three weeks longer, I would have needed chemotherapy. That's when I grasped the severity of the situation."

She had surgery to remove the mole and, during it, her doctor discovered that the cancer had spread into her lymph nodes all the way up to her hip. "They removed the mole on my foot and about an inch of skin surrounding it," she wrote. "They also took out four lymph nodes in my hip."

The recovery took about a month, and she tore open her stitches on her first day back at *DWTS*. "There were pools of blood everywhere! It made the recovery so much worse," she said.

Carson also had to see a foot specialist weekly after the show to rewrap her foot and remove scar tissue. She also did physical therapy for about six months as soon as the scar healed.

Now, Carson says she's careful about safe sun practices, and urges other people to wear hats outdoors and apply sunscreen regularly. "Don't make the mistake I did and think you're invincible—it's important to take precautions," she says.

Moles are usually brown, but they can also be tan, black, red, pink, blue, skin-toned, or colorless, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Red moles are less common than other colors, but they do exist, Susan Massick, M.D., a dermatologist at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, tells SELF.

In some cases what looks like a red mole is actually a cherry angioma, a skin growth made up of blood vessels, according to the U.S. National Library of Medicine. A red spot could also be a pyogenic granuloma, which is a common benign (meaning, not cancerous) skin growth, Gary Goldenberg, M.D., assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, tells SELF. For the record, cherry angiomas do not transform into melanomas, Dr. Massick notes.

These two types of skin growths can look like red moles to the untrained eye, but they actually aren't moles at all, Emily Y. Chu, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of dermatology and pathology and laboratory medicine at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, tells SELF.

A skin feature that appears reddish could also be an amelanotic melanoma, which is actually a colorless melanoma but may have a pinkish hue, Dr. Massick says.

Because red moles are so uncommon, any red color is “usually a concerning feature and the mole should either be followed closely or biopsied,” Dr. Goldenberg says.

It's also important to be on the lookout for any mole—red or otherwise—that falls under the ABCDEs of melanoma. That means the mole is **asymmetrical**, has an irregular **border**, is made up of different nonuniform shades of **color**, has a **diameter** larger than 6 millimeters across, or is **evolving** and changing in shape, size or color.

But these guidelines are just a starting point. “Not all melanomas meet these criteria,” Dr. Chu says. If you have a red lesion that’s new or growing rapidly or bleeding, you should see a doctor to get it checked out.