

Preparing for a FULL BODY SKIN EXAMINATION

Learn what to expect during a full body skin exam, how to prepare for your appointment, and ways to help your dermatologist identify concerning skin changes.



01 WHAT IS A FULL BODY SKIN EXAMINATION?

A **full-body skin exam** is a thorough, head-to-toe visual examination performed by a trained dermatology provider (dermatologists, physician associates or nurse practitioner with specialized training).

The goal is to:

- **Detect** skin cancer early
- **Identify** precancerous spots
- **Evaluate** any new, changing, or unusual skin lesions



02 HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR EXAM

- **Perform a self-exam** before your visit. Be prepared to point out any spots that are new, changing, itchy, painful, bleeding, or slow to heal.
- **Remove nail polish** from fingers and toes as skin cancer can develop under nails
- **Avoid self-tanner**
- **Wear hair down; remove** any ponytails, buns, clips and **avoid** hairspray or scalp products which can make a thorough scalp exam difficult.
- **Take off** any jewelry
- **Avoid** wearing makeup, or bring remover to your appointment as make up can hide some skin cancers
- **Wear** loose, easy-to-remove clothing



03 WHAT CAN I EXPECT DURING THE EXAM?

- Your provider will **review your medical history**, ask about personal and family history of skin cancer, prior biopsies and current medications.
- You will be asked to **undress and change** into a medical gown.
- You may **keep your underwear on** if you feel more comfortable
- The **provider will examine you** from head to toe including:
 - Scalp (hair may be parted)
 - Face, ears, neck
 - Arms, hands, fingers and under fingernails
 - Chest, abdomen and back
 - Legs, feet, toes and under toenails, and soles of feet
 - Genital area (based on your comfort level)
- The exam generally takes **10-15 minutes**.
- After the exam your provider will review any findings with you and discuss next steps, including biopsy results, follow-up timing, or self-monitoring tips.

How To Make the Exam Feel More Comfortable

- It is **normal to feel nervous or self-conscious** during a full-skin exam. Your provider's goal is to keep you comfortable and respected throughout the visit.
- Your **privacy** will be maintained at all times.
- The provider will **uncover one area at a time**.
- You may **request a chaperone** if one is not automatically provided.
- **Advocate for yourself:** tell your provider if you feel uncomfortable at any point of the visit- your provider can pause, explain, or adjust the exam.

What Happens If Something Concerning Is Found?

- If your provider sees a spot that looks unusual or potentially concerning, they may recommend a skin biopsy.
- Most biopsies can be done during the same visit and take only a few minutes.



A handheld magnifier or an instrument called a **dermatoscope** may be used to examine skin lesions in greater detail.

04 HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE A FULL BODY SKIN EXAM?

- How often a **full-body skin exam is advised** depends on your individual risk factors. For most adults, an exam once a year is generally recommended. Your provider may suggest more frequent exams based on your personal risk of developing skin cancer, including:
 - **Personal history** of skin cancer
 - **Family history** of skin cancer
 - **Skin type** and sun exposure
 - **Severity** of skin damage
 - **Number and type** of moles or other skin findings
 - **Immunosuppression** (conditions or medications that suppress the immune system)

