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Halo moles

A halo mole (or halo naevus) is a mole with a white ring, or halo, around it. It is sometimes known as Sutton naevus or leukoderma acquisitum centrifugum.

Halo moles are not uncommon and are usually seen in children or young adults of either sex.

Halo naevi



Why do they arise?

For reasons which are unknown, the body selects a particular mole or moles for destruction. This is presumably because the mole is recognised as being abnormal in some way. It is considered an autoimmune process.

The mole in the centre of a halo is rarely malignant (cancerous) although all halo moles need to be examined carefully by an appropriate medical practitioner. A malignant mole is called a [melanoma](#), and these may sometimes develop white halos around them as well.

Sometimes halo moles are triggered by [sunburn](#) which damages the mole and causes it to be recognised by the body as foreign.

A circulating antibody and special white cells (T cells) attack the pigment cells in the mole. This causes the central mole to fade from dark brown to light brown to pink, eventually disappearing completely. Some of the reaction affects the normal skin around the mole, which also has pigment cells in it, causing the white halo. This is usually about 0.5 to 1.0 cm wide, usually on the trunk. They are less common on the head, and are rare on the limbs. They develop at intervals round one or several moles but not all.

Once the the mole in the centre of the halo disappears, repigmentation can occur. This can sometimes take several years.

Treatment

If you have a halo mole, get your dermatologist or doctor to check it. Halos can be seen as part of a more generalised pigment loss, [vitiligo](#), or in [melanoma](#).

Apart from an explanation, no treatment is normally required. However [sunscreen](#) should be applied to all the skin during summer to prevent [sunburn](#). The white skin of a halo naevus will burn particularly easily in the sun because it is missing protective melanin pigment.

Related information

On DermNet NZ:

- [Moles](#)
- [Melanoma](#)
- [Mole mapping](#)
- [Vitiligo](#)
- [Sun protection](#)
- [Meyerson naevus](#)

Other websites:

- [Melanocytic nevi](#) - emedicine dermatology, the online textbook

DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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