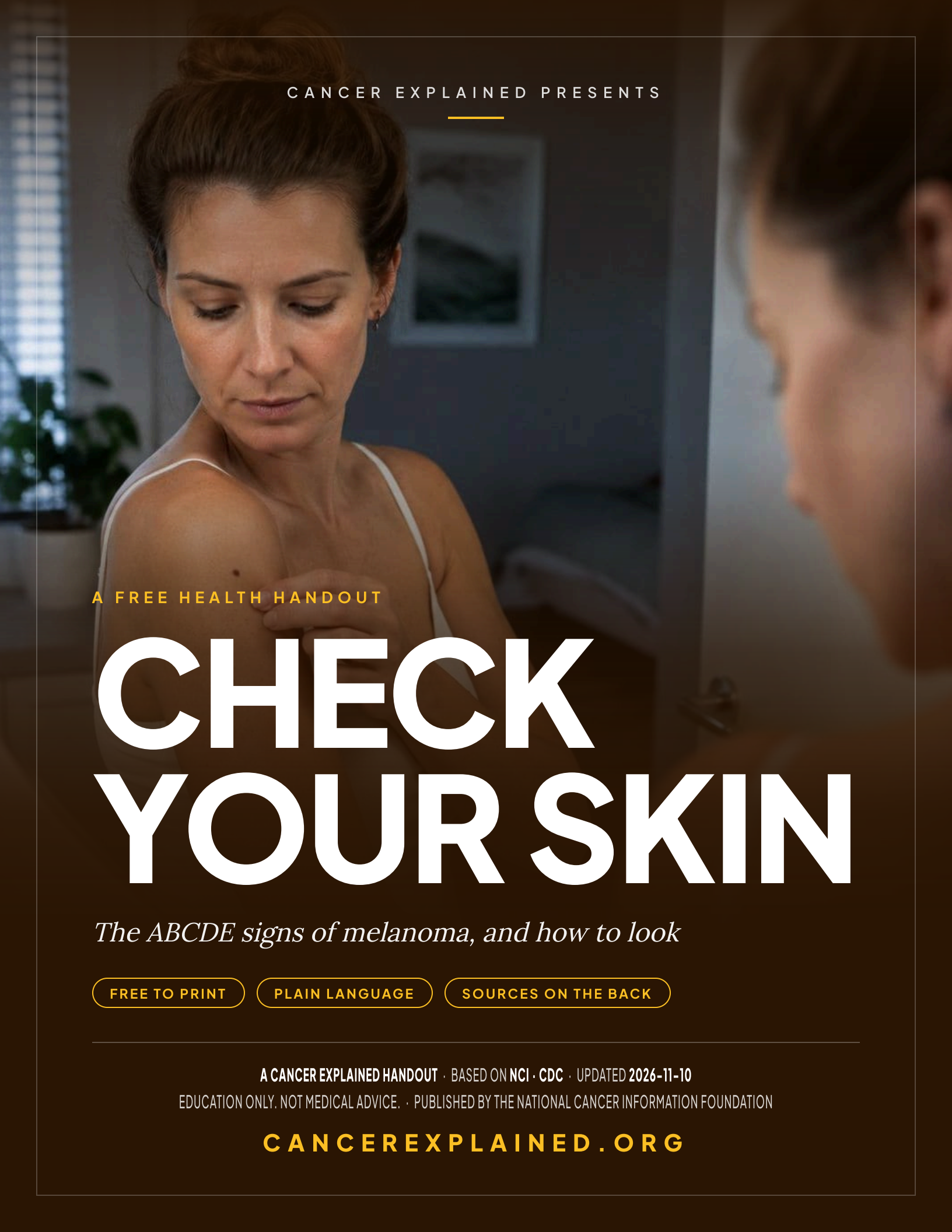


CANCER EXPLAINED PRESENTS

A FREE HEALTH HANDOUT

# CHECK YOUR SKIN

*The ABCDE signs of melanoma, and how to look*

FREE TO PRINT · PLAIN LANGUAGE · SOURCES ON THE BACK

**A CANCER EXPLAINED HANDOUT** · BASED ON **NCI · CDC** · UPDATED **2026-11-10**
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# Check Your Skin

*The ABCDE signs of melanoma, and how to look*

cancer explained.org

## 1 The ABCDE signs

- [ ] A is for Asymmetry: one half does not match the other.
- [ ] B is for Border: the edges are ragged, notched, or blurred.
- [ ] C is for Color: uneven shades of brown, black, tan, red, white, or blue.
- [ ] D is for Diameter: most melanomas are larger than 6 millimeters wide (about 1/4 inch), but they can be smaller.
- [ ] E is for Evolving: the spot has changed in size, shape, or color.

## 2 How to look

- [ ] Use a bright room, a full-length mirror, and a hand mirror.
- [ ] Check the front, back, and sides of your body, with arms raised.
- [ ] Look at your scalp, behind your ears, and the back of your neck.
- [ ] Look at your palms, soles, between your toes, and under your nails.
- [ ] Ask someone you trust to look at your back.

## 3 People of every skin tone

- [ ] Anyone can get skin cancer.
- [ ] In people with darker skin, melanoma is more often found on the palms, the soles, and under the nails.

## 4 Show a doctor

- [ ] A new spot, or one that looks different from your others.
- [ ] A spot that changes, itches, or bleeds.
- [ ] A sore that does not heal.
- [ ] A dark streak under a nail that was not caused by an injury.

## Spots I am watching

| Date | Where on my body | Size and color | Changed since last check? |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

THE BOTTOM LINE

**You know your skin best. If a spot is new, changing, or just looks wrong to you, have a doctor look at it.**

**Sources:** NCI: Common moles, dysplastic nevi, and risk of melanoma (cancer.gov/types/skin/moles-fact-sheet) · NCI: Skin cancer screening (cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-screening-pdq) · CDC: Skin cancer symptoms (cdc.gov/skin-cancer/symptoms/index.html)

**Learn more in plain language:** cancerexplained.org/essentials/melanoma · **Updated:** 2026-11-10

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