

## “Help my haloed moles!”

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A healthy 15-year-old girl is concerned with her moles. She recently noticed a white rim around some of her melanocytic nevi and is unsure about their significance. She worries about melanoma.

### *Should she be reassured?*

This is a case of halo nevus (Sutton's nevus), a benign condition in which a pigmented nevus is surrounded by a hypopigmented or depigmented ring. It represents an immune response directed towards nevomelanocytes.

Halo nevus is seen predominantly in teenagers (mean age of 15 years) and affects < 1% of individuals under the age of 20.

In typical cases, the central pigmented nevus is symmetrical, homogeneous and has a regular border. Its size usually varies between 3 mm and 6 mm. The surrounding halo is even with a width of a few millimetres to centimetres.



Figure 1. Halo nevus.

Halo nevi are most commonly found on the upper back, although they can be found on any body part. Twenty-five per cent to 50% of affected individuals have more than one lesion.

With time, the central nevus can disappear completely (or up to 50%), stay unchanged or encompass some colour changes. Similarly, the white halo can slowly disappear or persist unaltered.

## Are halo nevi a sign of malignant transformation?

Halo nevi are rarely of any concern if they are regular, symmetrical and homogenous (as is usually the case). However, as with any pigmented lesion, a careful skin examination should be performed. A personal and family history should also be taken, paying particular attention to a past history of atypical nevi or melanoma.

Excision should be considered in any clinically atypical lesion.

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