

**Mayo Clinic News Network**

**How a perceptive friend saved a life**

<b>Video</b>	<b>Audio</b>
	John Murphy had gotten used to seeing the age spot on his forehead.
	He had even had a dermatologist look at it in the past.
	So he was surprised when a friend and work colleague noticed it.
00:00:24	“She very quietly, very respectfully said to me, John, I think that age spot on your face has changed. And I said, do you really think so? And she said, yeah, it’s a little darker and a little bigger. If I were you, I’d call Dermatology.”
	Murphy immediately made an appointment to have the spot checked to see if it could be skin cancer.
	A few days later he was sitting at his desk at work at Mayo Clinic when he got the biopsy results: It was malignant melanoma, the most dangerous kind of skin cancer.
00:01:44	“I just sort of was stunned.”
	Within days, Murphy went in for what is called a Mohs surgery to have it removed.
	“They actually go in and they try to find clean margins.”
00:03:01 <b>John Murphy</b> <b>Malignant Melanoma patient</b>	“So it’s a process of looking at the specimen to see if it’s cancerous – and it takes a while with staining. And, then, if not, then they go back in and they do a little bit more and they do a little bit more.”
	Dr. Cathy Newman, Murphy’s dermatologist at Mayo Clinic, says melanoma is generally treated surgically.

	In special circumstances, Mohs surgery is used for more precise removal – often when a melanoma is on the face.
	Mohs surgery is also used to remove melanomas with ill-defined margins, to make sure all of it is removed.
	Weeks later, Murphy had another malignant spot removed.
	Dr. Newman says Murphy was lucky he caught his melanomas when he did.
00:03:31 <b>Cathy Newman, M.D.</b> <b>Dermatology</b> <b>Mayo Clinic</b>	“It’s the melanomas that become nodules rapidly, start bleeding or ... get very thick. The melanoma prognosis is dependent on how thick the lesion is. So if you have a thin lesion and you catch it early, it is very, very treatable.”
	But Murphy also knows what could happen when someone doesn’t notice the signs of a melanoma.
00:07:42	“I was shocked about how deadly melanoma can be. When I did some research, it really showed that it was an aggressive type of cancer. It could be – get into your lymph nodes and into your blood system, and then go throughout your body and cause some major problems.”
	And since melanoma is far more common than most people realize ...
00:04:16	“... there are at least 1 million Americans living with melanoma at this time, or [have] a history of melanoma.”
	Dr. Newman says it’s important for all of us to say something like Murphy’s friend did.
00:07:30	“If you see something that really looks – and, you know, like it’s got very irregular borders, not uniform color, again, like I said, you could just maybe gently say, ‘Have you had someone look at that maybe?’”
	Because, in his case, Murphy says his perceptive friend likely saved his life.
00:05:41	“When I talked to my friend and thanked her for saying something, it really was

	out of a sense of gratitude and ... just very thankful to her that she actually took the ... initiative to ... say this to me.”
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network,
	“It does really warm my heart.”
	I’m Ian Roth.