

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION TIPS



FACTS & STATISTICS

All during the year, but especially during the Spring and Summer months, people increase their exposure to the sun at work and at play. Increased exposure to the UV rays of the sun, is one leading cause of skin cancer. People of all skin types can get skin cancer, and so its important to protect your skin from the harmful rays by wearing protection (hats, light clothes, shades) and using sunscreen.

As a matter of fact, the number of skin cancer cases has increased in the United States. More than 1 million cases of basal cell or squamous cell cancer will be diagnosed annually.

The most serious form of skin cancer, malignant melanoma, is expected to be diagnosed in 55,100 persons. Since 1981, the incidence of melanoma has increased a little less than 3 percent per year. Melanoma is the most common cancer among people 25 to 29 years old.

The three major types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma.

Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas can cause substantial illness and, if untreated, can cause considerable damage and disfigurement. If detected and treated early, however, these carcinomas have a cure rate of more than 90%.

Malignant melanoma causes more than 75% of all deaths from skin cancer. This disease can spread to other organs, most commonly the lungs and liver. Malignant melanoma diagnosed at an early stage usually can be cured, but melanoma diagnosed at a late stage is more likely to spread and can cause death.

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important environmental factor in developing skin cancer. This makes skin cancer a largely preventable disease when sun protective practices and behaviors are consistently applied and utilized. UV radiation is also a factor in the development of lip cancer, making sun protection even more important. UV rays from artificial sources of light, such as tanning beds and sun lamps are just as dangerous as those from the sun, and should also be avoided. Unfortunately, despite the fact that both tanning and burning can increase one's risk of skin cancer, most Americans do not protect themselves from UV rays.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Although anyone can get skin cancer, individuals with certain risk factors are particularly at risk. Some risk factors for skin cancer are:

- Lighter natural skin color
- Family history of skin cancer
- Personal history of skin cancer
- Constant exposure to the sun through work and play
- A history of sunburns early in life
- Skin that burns, freckles, gets red easily, or becomes painful in the sun
- Blue or green eyes
- Blond or red hair
- Certain types and a large number of moles

WHAT IS SUNSCREEN?

Sunscreen filters out the sun's dangerous UV (ultraviolet) rays. These invisible rays can cause skin cancer. Some skin cancers can cause death if not found and treated early.



WHO SHOULD WEAR SUNSCREEN?

People of all skin colors can get skin cancer from the sun's UV rays. Those who are most likely to get skin cancer from these rays have:

- Lighter natural skin color.
- Skin that burns, freckles, gets red easily, or becomes painful from the sun.
- Blond or red hair.
- Blue or green eyes.
- A family member who has had skin cancer. Also, people who spend a lot of time outdoors, either for work or play, are more likely to get skin cancer from UV rays.

WHICH SUNSCREEN?

Use a sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Sunscreens come in many forms, including ointments, creams, gels, lotions, wax sticks, and sprays. Follow the directions on the package for using a sunscreen product on babies less than 6 months old. All products do not have the same ingredients; if your or your skin reacts badly to one product, try another one or call a doctor.

Sunscreen wears off. Put it on again if you stay out in the sun for more than 2 hours; and after you swim or do things that make you sweat.

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention