

It's that time of year again when people head outdoors to enjoy the beautiful, sunny weather. That being said, it is good for your health to understand the dark side of the sun. Skin cancer is the most common type of all cancers in the United States currently, with over 5 million cases diagnosed annually. Fortunately, most types of skin cancer are preventable and if diagnosed and treated early, can often be cured. Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer, and the rates of melanoma have been on the rise in the past few decades. By sharing the facts about the dangers of unprotected sun exposure and encouraging patients to check their skin for warning signs, we help save lives.

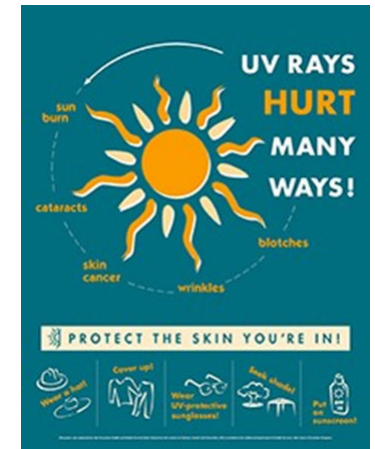


Pamela Gadbow, FNP-C

Skin cancers are caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, primarily from the sun. There is a cumulative effect of sun exposure and blistering sun burns that occur in childhood and throughout adulthood increase your chance of getting skin cancer. Only a little over half of American adults use sun-protection measures. It is important to start protecting skin at a young age, but it is never too late to start eliminating sun damage.

Besides sun exposure, there are some other risk factors for skin cancer. Skin type has a lot to do with it. Fair skin, light hair, and light eyes are risk factors for melanoma. Sun exposure is by far the most risk factor. The use of tanning salons is also a risk factor. Self-tanning lotions do not pose a risk and are the best way to achieve that sun-kissed glow without the risk of damaging your skin.

Knowing your skin and how it looks is important for detecting any changing moles. We recommend annual full body skin examinations if you have no known history of skin cancer. People with a history of skin cancer should be evaluated at least twice a year by a dermatologist. Performing monthly skin checks at home can help detect skin cancers early.



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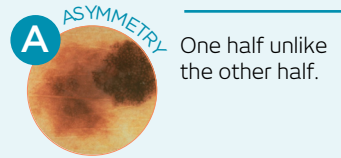


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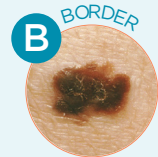


The ABCDEs of Melanoma

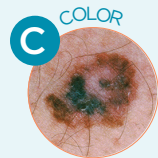
What are the symptoms of melanoma? The ABCDE is the key. This applies to new or changing moles. A is for asymmetry; B is for irregular borders; C is for color variation; D is for a diameter greater than 6 millimeters (about the size of a pencil eraser); and E is for evolution, or any change in a mole, including itching or bleeding. Any new lesion that bleeds or scabs and does not go away over four weeks should be brought to your dermatologist's attention. When in doubt, get it checked out.



One half unlike the other half.



Look for edges that are uneven, scalloped or blurry.



Melanomas may contain different colors or different shades of a color.

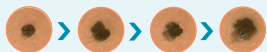


Most melanomas are 1/4 inch (roughly the size of a pencil eraser) or larger.

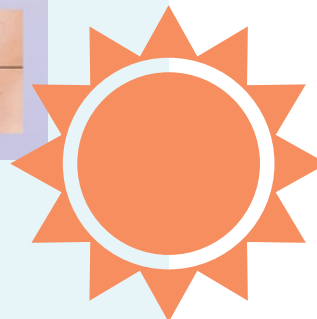


A mole or skin lesion that looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape or color.

Example:



NORMAL	ABNORMAL



PROTECT
ALL THE SKIN YOU'RE IN



Use a Layered Approach for Sun Protection.



Sunscreen works best when used with shade or clothes, and it must be re-applied every 2 hours and after swimming, sweating, or toweling off.



Use broad spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15 to protect exposed skin.



Wear a hat, sunglasses, and protective clothing to shield skin.



Seek shade, especially during midday hours.

Ways to Protect Your Skin

Here are some ways to protect yourself against the UVA and UVB rays of the sun. When outside seek shade, cover up, wear a hat and sunglasses, and wear sunscreen.

Peak sun hours are from 10 am to 4pm, so plan outdoor activities before or after. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF of 30 or higher, and be sure to re-apply every 2 hours or sooner if swimming. It is best to apply to sun exposed areas 10 minutes before going outdoors. Did you know sunscreen is still important, even when driving in the car because the sun's powerful UV rays penetrate through glass. And don't forget to apply sunscreen on the ears and nose, as those are very common spots for skin cancers. Nowadays, there are lots of clothing available with UV protection in them, including bathing suits, shirts, hats, jackets, etc. Be sure to replace them annually and check for expiration dates. Ask your dermatologist about specific recommendations.

Resources to Answer Your Sunscreen Questions:

AAD.org

skincancer.org

coolibar.com

(for sun-protective clothing; there are many more but look for skin cancer foundation seal of approval)

Wondering how skin cancers are treated?

If you have a lesion that you are worried about, first step is to go see your dermatologist, who can further evaluate at suspicious lesions. Most basal and squamous cell carcinomas can be treated in office. If there is a diagnosis of melanoma, a melanoma surgeon may become involved, and the treatment depends on the depth of the melanoma. The deeper the melanoma, the greater the chance of lymph node involvement. This is why early detection and treatment is so important and can be life-saving!

Help Yourself by Following Safe Sun Practices

Finally, help us by helping yourself follow safe sun practices for yourself and your loved ones. You are the most important part of Skin Cancer Awareness Month! Share your skin cancer facts, prevention guidelines, and early detection content with friends and loved ones. Book your next full body skin examination with one of our amazing providers if you are overdue or have never had one. It's never too late to start loving the skin you're in! Our dedicated team is here for you every step of the way.

Be Skin Smart
GET CHECKED!

**SPF
30+**



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