



Skin Cancer 2009 Fact Sheet

Introduction

An estimated 74,610 people will be diagnosed with skin cancer in 2009. That number increases to more than 1 million when basal cell and squamous cell skin cancer estimates (not reported to cancer registries) are included. Skin cancer is the most common and most preventable of cancers. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation causes most skin cancer.

Recent research on the benefits of vitamin D (made by the skin from sunlight) indicates that just a brief exposure of your face, arms and hands to the sun is sufficient—about 15 minutes a day, three days per week. Talk to your health care professional about Vitamin D and your health.

Anyone of any skin color may develop skin cancer, and everybody can take steps to prevent it.

At Risk

- People who have excessive exposure to ultraviolet light, usually from the sun (but also from tanning lamps and booths)
- People who smoke
- People who have blond, red or light brown hair, and blue, gray or green eyes
- People with fair skin or freckles, or whose skin burns easily
- People with a personal or family history of skin cancer
- People with weakened immune systems
- People who have had organ transplants and who take immuno-suppressive drugs.
- People who are exposed to radiation
- People who have several moles on their bodies, especially since birth, or who have unusual moles
- People who have one or more large pigmented spots
- People whose drinking water contains arsenic

Men are more likely than women to get non-melanoma skin cancer. People who are white are more likely to develop melanoma (a type of skin cancer that can be fatal) than are African Americans.

Risk Reduction and Early Detection

- Avoid sun exposure during between 10 am and 4 pm.
- Always wear sunscreen with UVB and UVA exposure protective chemicals and with SPF 15 or higher, even on cloudy days.
- Apply at least one ounce—about a shot glass full—of sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going out in the sun, and reapply frequently — at least every two hours if in continuous sunlight.
- Wear sunglasses treated to absorb ultraviolet (UV) radiation, use a lip balm with an SPF of at least 15, and wear tight-weave clothing with long sleeves and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Children in particular should be protected from the sun because severe sunburns in childhood may greatly increase risk of melanoma in later life.
- Have a routine whole-body skin check by a health care professional once a year.

Symptoms

- A sore that doesn't heal
- A growth you haven't noticed before
- Change in the border of a spot: spread of color, redness or swelling into surrounding skin
- Itchiness, tenderness or pain from a mole
- Change in sensation (painful, tender)
- A brown or black colored spot with uneven margins or a new mole
- A small, smooth, shiny, pale or waxy lump that may bleed



- Large areas with oozing or crust
- A flat red spot or a lump that is scaly or crusty

When looking at moles, remember the ABCDE rule: **A**symmetry, **B**order irregularity, **C**olor that is not uniform, **D**iameter greater than 6 mm (about the size of a pencil eraser), **E**volving size, shape or color.

If you discover a suspicious growth, see your health care professional. Because risk increases with age, annual clinical examinations are more important after age 50.

Treatment

If found at an early stage, most skin cancer can be treated successfully. Treatment options depend on the type of skin cancer and the stage.

Common treatments for skin cancer:

- Surgery
- Various chemotherapies
- Radiation therapy

Other possible treatments:

- Immunotherapy (for melanoma skin cancer)
- Photodynamic therapy (for non-melanoma skin cancer)