



SKIN CANCER: PREVENTION & EARLY DETECTION

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the US. In fact, each year there are more new cases of skin cancer than the combined incidence of cancers of the breast, prostate, lung and colon; and one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in the course of their lifetime.

There has been a dramatic increase in all three types of skin cancer (basal cell, squamous cell, and melanoma) over the past 35 years, which dermatologists attribute to the ever-increasing use of tanning beds. More people develop skin cancer because of tanning than develop lung cancer because of smoking.

Melanoma is the most lethal skin cancer - the American Academy of Dermatology reports that one American dies every 54 minutes from melanoma. The risk of developing melanoma doubles if an individual had ≥ 5 sunburns in their lifetime. Regular daily use of SPF 15 or higher reduces the risk of melanoma by 50%.

Fair-skinned individuals who sunburn easily are at the highest risk for developing skin cancer, but darker skinned individuals do not escape these cancers. Bob Marley died of melanoma at age 36.

EARLY DETECTION IS KEY

Develop a regular routine to inspect your body for any skin changes. If a growth, mole, sore, or skin discoloration appears suddenly, or begins to change, see a dermatologist. It is wise to have an **annual skin examination by a dermatologist**, especially for adults with significant past sun exposure, a family history of skin cancer, or other known risk factors.

HOW TO BE SUN SMART

Unprotected sun exposure is the most preventable risk factor for all skin cancers, including melanoma. You can have fun in the sun and decrease your risk of skin cancer by following some simple rules:

- **Generously apply a Broad-Spectrum water-resistant sunscreen** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF), of at least 25 for daily and 40-50 if you'll be at the pool or beach, to all exposed skin. UVA rays penetrate ozone, clouds and glass, so they can cause damage even on cloudy days when you are driving in your car. For the sake of simplicity consider UVA rays to be aging rays, causing wrinkles, brown spots, enlarged pores, and visible capillaries, and UVB rays to be Burning rays; but both UVA and UVB rays can cause cancer. Therefore, we need to apply "broad-spectrum" sunscreens which provide protection against both UVA and UVB rays. If you are outside and active, re-apply sunscreen every several hours and after swimming or sweating, even on cloudy days.
- **The best Broad-spectrum sunscreens contain Zinc Oxide, Titanium Dioxide, or Iron Oxide.** *We sell several of the best sunscreen available; and they are reasonably priced.*
- **Seek shade** when appropriate, remembering that the UVB rays are strongest between 10 AM and 4 PM.
- **Protect children** from sun exposure by playing in the shade, using protective clothing, and applying medically available sunscreens known to be safe for children. *We sell several terrific ones.* Babies 0-6 months should be kept out of the sun as much as possible because of their sensitive skin.
- **Use extra caution near water, snow, and ice** as they reflect 80% of the UV-B rays back, increasing the risk of sunburn and skin cancer.
- **Get vitamin D safely through a healthy diet.** Ask your family doctor or internist to check your vitamin D levels. Many people who live at our latitude are vitamin D deficient and need to take vitamin D3 supplements.
- **Avoid tanning beds at all cost.** UV rays from tanning beds are concentrated and increase the risk of skin cancer. A person who first used a tanning bed before age 35 increases their risk of melanoma by 75%. A person who uses a tanning device before the age of 20 increases their risk of squamous cell cancer 3.6 times and their basal cancer risk is 1.8 times greater. If you prefer to have some color, try a sunless tanning product. *We carry a tinted, non-comedogenic, medical grade sunscreen for the face, neck and chest.*
- **Check your birthday suit on your birthday!** If you notice anything changing, growing or bleeding on your skin, see a dermatologist. Skin cancer is very treatable when caught early.
- **Wear a broad brimmed hat** that you love and are willing to wear as well as large sunglasses with both UVA and UVB protection.
- **On a daily basis, remember, "The face begins at the nipples."** Apply your sunscreen moisturizer to your face, neck, and décolleté; and then apply any extra to the backs of your hands.

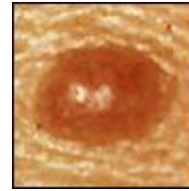
The "ABCDE" Rule of Melanoma Danger Signs

Finding melanoma early is the key to curing this vicious cancer. Learn the ABCDE mnemonic for recognizing moles and growths that might be cancerous. Though most (if not all) of your "suspicious" moles will turn out to be normal, non-cancerous moles, it is much better to be safe than to not see, or ignore, an early melanoma. Be sure to review how to do a monthly skin examination to properly look for abnormal growths.

If your mole or growth has one or more of the ABCDEs, you should show it to your dermatologist as soon as possible!

Asymmetry

Asymmetry can be assessed by comparing one half of the growth to the other half to determine if the halves are equal in size. Unequal or asymmetric moles are suspicious.



Symmetric
(normal)



Asymmetric

Border

If the mole's border is irregular, notched, scalloped, or indistinct, it is more likely to be cancerous (or precancerous) and is thus suspicious.



Regular Border
(normal)



Irregular Border

Color

Variation of color (e.g., more than one color or shade) within a mole is a suspicious finding. Different shades of browns, blues, reds, whites, and blacks are all concerning.



One Color (normal)



Color Variance

Diameter

Any mole that has a diameter larger than a pencil's eraser in size (> 6 mm) should be considered suspicious.

Elevation

If a mole is elevated, or raised from the skin, it should be considered suspicious.

Other Danger Signs of Malignant Melanoma:

- Change in color, especially multiple shades of dark brown or black; red, white and blue,
- Change or spreading of color from the edge of the mole into surrounding skin.
- Change in size, especially sudden or continuous enlargement.
- Change in shape, especially development of irregular margins or border.
- Change in elevation, especially sudden elevation of a previously flat mole.
- Change in the surface texture of a mole, especially scaliness, erosion, oozing, crusting, ulceration, or bleeding.
- Change in the surrounding skin, especially redness, swelling, or new moles.
- Change in sensation, especially itching, tenderness, or pain.

Basically, any mole or growth that is CHANGING needs to be checked by a dermatologist.

[From the Skin Cancer Guide, the ABC Mole Warning Signs]