

Skin Cancer



Skin cancer is the most common – and preventable – cancer in the United States, affecting more than 1 million people each year. Exposure to the sun causes most skin cancer. An estimated 65,050 cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed and about 10,850 Americans will die from the disease this year.

Prevention

- Avoid sun exposure during between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Always wear sunscreen of 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.
- Wear sunglasses treated to absorb ultraviolet (UV) radiation, use a lip balm with an SPF of at least 15, and wear tight-weave clothing and a wide-brimmed hat.

At Risk—People With:

- Blond, red or light brown hair; blue, gray or green eyes
- Fair complexion and/or freckles; skin that burns easily
- A family history of skin cancer
- Several moles on the body, especially ones there since birth or unusual moles
- One or more large pigmented spots
- Excessive exposure to the sun and/or any blistering sunburns before the age of 15

Early Detection

Examine your skin once a month. Look for:

- A brown or black colored spot with uneven margins or a new mole
- A slow-growing, raised, pearly bump that may crust, ulcerate or bleed
- Itchiness, tenderness or pain from a mole
- A small, smooth, shiny, pale or waxy lump
- A flat red spot – scaly, crusty, smooth or shiny

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 your risk increases with age, annual clinical examinations are more important after age 50.

Treatment

If caught early, most skin cancer can be treated successfully.

- Surgical removal, including a procedure called Mohs' surgery
- Electrodesiccation and curettage and: electrical current to remove tissue
- Cryosurgery – freezing to destroy tissue
- Laser therapy, radiation or topical chemotherapy