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Skin Cancer

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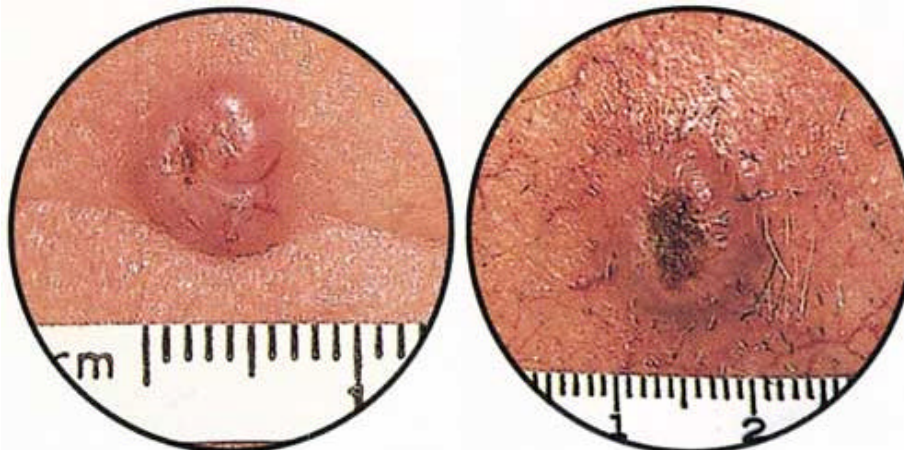
More than one million people will be diagnosed with skin cancer this year. Nationally there are more new cases of skin cancer than the combined incidents of cancers of the breast, prostate, lung, and colon. More than ninety caused by sun exposure, yet fewer than thirty-three percent of adults, teens, and children routinely use sun protection. Skin cancer is the number one cancer in men over fifty, ahead of prostate, lung, and colon cancer. And in the past thirty years, skin cancer has tripled in women ages twenty to twenty-nine. Regular sun protection throughout childhood can reduce the chance for skin cancer by eighty percent.

Types of Skin Cancer

Skin cancers are named after the type of cells that become cancerous. There are three types of skin cancer; Basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and malignant melanoma. (For more information on melanoma, please see the melanoma article.)

Basal cell carcinoma : Basal cell grows slowly and usually occurs on sun exposed skin. It can have several appearances, such as an open sore, a reddish patch, and elevated border with a central indentation, a bump or nodule, and a scar-like area. Basal cell carcinoma rarely spreads (metastasizes) to other parts of the body. It is the most common cancer in the U.S. and is virtually ninety-nine percent curable. Once you have had one BCC you are more likely to have additional skin cancers.

Squamous cell carcinoma : Squamous cell also occurs in sun exposed areas, but it can also occur in areas that are not in the sun. If left untreated, squamous cell can penetrate and destroy underlying tissues. In a small number of cases, this tumor can metastasize to distant organs and be fatal. SCC can appear to be a scaly red patch, a wart-like growth, nodules or open cores with or without a crust or bleeding. The cure rate for SCC is ninety-five percent if detected early. Once you have had SCC you are more likely to be diagnosed with another skin cancer.



Basal cell carcinoma

Squamous cell carcinoma

Risk Factors

- UV Radiation- UV radiation comes from the sun, tanning bed, and sun lamps. A person's risk of skin cancer is related to their lifetime exposure of UV radiation. Sun damage is cumulative. UV radiation affects everyone. Light eyed and light haired are at the greatest risk. People who live in the southern states or live in the mountains receive more UV radiation than the normal United States. UVA are invisible rays from the sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. UVA is believed to cause skin damage that can lead to skin cancer and premature aging. UVB are invisible rays that come from the sun. UVB causes sun burn and is believed to cause skin cancer and melanoma.
- Scars or burns on the skin
- Exposure to arsenic at work
- Chronic skin ulcers
- Human papilloma virus infections
- Radiation therapy
- Medical conditions or drugs that suppress the immune system
- Personal history of one or more skin cancers
- Family history of skin cancer

Prevention

- Avoid tanning beds
- Avoid sun exposure between the hours of 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. when the UV radiation is at its highest
- Seek shade as much as possible
- Wear long sleeves and pants while outdoors that are made of tightly woven fabric, a wide brimmed hat, and 100% UV protection sunglasses (for more info on 100% UVA and UVB clothing and hats search the internet for Solumbra Sun Precautions, or Coolibar.)
- Conduct monthly self skin exams to look for any changes or any new lesions
- Use a broad spectrum sun block that contains zinc oxide or titanium dioxide (physical sun blocking agents) with an SPF 30 or higher. For an adult, apply one ounce (the size of a short glass) to entire body, 30 minutes before going outside. Once you have swam, perspired, or towed off you need to reapply. Otherwise reapplication needs to be completed every 90 to 120 minutes. Do not rely on sun block alone to protect you. Please follow all of the other instructions as well.
- See your dermatology every six months for a full body skin cancer screening.