



## Skin Cancer Fact Sheet

### Introduction

Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis, and it's the most preventable cancer. Most skin cancer is caused by damage from the sun's UV rays (ultraviolet radiation). This year, an estimated 76,690 people will be diagnosed with melanoma—the most dangerous type of skin cancer—and over 9,000 will die of the disease. Every year, as many as two million people are diagnosed with non-melanoma skin cancer—either basal cell or squamous cell carcinoma.

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.

### At Risk

- People who spend time in the sun, or use sun lamps or tanning 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 skin that burns easily
- People with personal or family histories of skin cancer
- People with certain types of genetic problems that affect the skin
- People who have been treated with radiation
- People with weakened immune systems
- People who have several moles on their bodies, especially if they have had some moles since they were born
- People who have odd moles or one or more large colored spots on their skin
- People who have had contact with certain chemicals, such as arsenic in drinking water
- People whose skin is damaged from injury or from long-term inflammation
- People with HPV (human papillomavirus)

Men are more likely than women to get non-melanoma skin cancer. People who are white are more likely to develop melanoma than are African Americans. However, anyone with any skin color may develop skin cancer. The risk for skin cancer increases as people get older.

### Risk Reduction and Early Detection

- **Avoid the sun, especially between 10 am and 4 pm, and don't use sun lamps or tanning beds.**
- **Always use sunscreen and lip balm with UVB and UVA protection with SPF 30 or more, even on cloudy days.**
- **Apply an ounce of sunscreen—a palm full—20 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply every two hours if in continuous sun.**
- **Wear sunglasses that have been treated to absorb UV radiation, a wide brim hat, and clothing made of tightly woven material with long sleeves.**
- **Protect children from the sun. Childhood sunburns may increase the risk of melanoma later in life.**
- **Look at your skin once a month. Tell your health care professional about any changes.**
- **Have your health care professional examine your skin once a year after age 50.**

**Stop Cancer Before It Starts!**



## Symptoms

- A sore that doesn't heal
- A mole or other growth you haven't noticed before
- Change in the border of a spot, spread of color, redness or swelling around the area.
- 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
- Itchiness, tenderness or pain from a mole or elsewhere on your skin
- A brown or black colored spot with uneven edges

When looking at moles, remember the ABCDE rule: Asymmetry (one half of the mole doesn't match the other), Border irregularity, Color that is not uniform, Diameter greater than 6 mm (about the size of a pencil eraser), and Evolving size, shape or color.

Talk with your health care professional if you notice any of these symptoms.

## Treatment

Most skin cancers found at an early stage can be treated successfully. Treatment depends on the type of skin cancer and the stage of the disease.

### Common Treatment for Skin Cancer:

- Surgery
- Various chemotherapies
- Radiation
- Biological drug treatments

### Other Possible Treatment:

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

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For more information about skin cancer, visit  
[www.PreventCancer.org](http://www.PreventCancer.org)

*This fact sheet features information from the following sources:*

*American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures, 2013.*

*American Cancer Society. Detailed Guide to Skin Cancer: Basal and Squamous Cell. [www.cancer.org/Cancer/SkinCancer-BasalandSquamousCell/DetailedGuide/Index](http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/SkinCancer-BasalandSquamousCell/DetailedGuide/Index).*

*American Cancer Society. Detailed Guide to Skin Cancer: Melanoma.*

*[www.cancer.org/cancer/skincancer-melanoma/index](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/skincancer-melanoma/index).*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Skin Cancer Basic Information. <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/>.*

*"Incidence Estimate of Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer in the United States, 2006." Archives of Dermatology 146(3), 283-287, 2010.*

*Institute of Medicine Report. "Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium and Vitamin D." [www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Dietary-Reference-Intakes-for-Calcium-and-Vitamin-D/Press-Release.aspx](http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2010/Dietary-Reference-Intakes-for-Calcium-and-Vitamin-D/Press-Release.aspx).*

*National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health. What You Need to Know About Skin Cancer.*

*[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/skin](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/skin),*

*National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health. What You Need to Know About Melanoma.*

*[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/melanoma](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/melanoma).*

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