

Striving to educate our members to be more ProActive towards a healthier lifestyle.

SKIN CANCER

Volume 8

Skin Cancer

August 2017

Quick Facts:

- **One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in the course of their lifetime.**
- **Over the past 3 decades, more people have had skin cancer than all other cancers combined.**
- **Approximately 90% of all non-melanoma skin cancers are associated with exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun.**
- **The estimated annual cost of treating skin cancer in the United States is \$8.1 billion.**
- **In 2010, new research found that daily sunscreen use cut the incidence of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, in half.**

Skin cancer is defined as the uncontrolled growth of abnormal skin cells. It occurs when unrepaired DNA damage to skin cells triggers mutations, or genetic defects, that lead the skin cells to multiply rapidly and form malignant tumors. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. It is estimated that almost 9,500 individuals in the United States are diagnosed with skin cancer every day.

Skin cancer may initially appear as a nodule, irregular patch or a bump on the surface of the skin. As the cancer grows, the visible skin mass may change in shape and size. Once visible changes occur, it is likely that the cancer is expanding into the lower layers of the skin. Regular examination of the skin for any new or unusual growths, or changes in the size, shape or color of an existing spot, is key to finding and treating skin cancers early. If you find anything suspicious, you should discuss it with your primary care physician or a dermatologist.

The most common types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. According to the American Cancer Society, about 5.4 million basal and squamous cell skin cancers are diagnosed each year. About 8 out of 10 of these are basal cell cancers. Squamous cell cancers occur less often.

Basal cell carcinoma arises in the skin's basal cells, located in the deepest layer of the epidermis, or the outermost layer of the skin. Basal cell carcinomas often appear as open sores, red patches, shiny bumps or scars, typically in areas that receive the most exposure to sun. This type of skin cancer grows slowly and it is rare for them to spread to distant parts of the body.

Squamous cell carcinoma arises in the squamous cells of the skin, which are located in most of the skin's upper layers. It is the second most common type of skin cancer affecting approximately 20% of non-melanoma skin cancers. This type of cancer is most commonly found on the neck, ears, face or the back of the hand in the form of a lump. These firm lumps may be rough, or a reddish, scaly patch. When squamous cell carcinoma develops, it is known to invade fatty tissues beneath the skin and spread even further.



Prevention

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends that everyone practice a monthly head-to-toe self-examination of their skin to recognize any changing areas along with always using a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Sun protection is essential for skin cancer prevention. Ultraviolet radiation is a part of the electromagnetic spectrum from the sun that reaches the earth.

There are two types of ultraviolet radiation, UVA and UVB. UVA is the longer wave UV ray that causes lasting skin damage, skin aging, and can cause skin cancer. UVB is the shorter wave UV ray that causes sunburns, skin damage, and can cause skin cancer. SPF is a measure of a sunscreen's ability to prevent UVB from damaging your skin. Most sunscreens with an SPF of 15 or higher do a great job of protecting against UVB. Broad spectrum sunscreens protect against UVA and UVB rays.

The following are more prevention tips from the Skin Cancer Foundation:

- Seek the shade between the hours of 10am and 4pm.
- Do not allow yourself to sunburn.
- Avoid tanning beds all together.
- When outside, cover up with clothing and/ or always use sun screen with an SPF of 15 or higher (SPF 30 or higher if you are in direct sunlight for longer periods of time).
- Choose a "water resistant" or "very water resistant" sunscreen, which are effective for up to 40 and 80 minutes in water respectively.
- Reapply often, at least every 2 hours.
- Don't forget about your lips; look for a chapstick or lip balm with SPF protection.
- Check the label; Sunscreens with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide may be better for people with sensitive skin.

As always, ProAct encourages you to see your physician for your yearly checkup. At your yearly checkup, be sure to have your physician check for any abnormalities in your skin.

Wishing you a happy and healthy summer season.

Sincerely,
Your ProAct Team

Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer. Melanomas often resemble moles; the majority of melanomas are black or brown, but they can also be skin-colored, pink, red, purple, blue or white. Melanoma is caused mainly by intense, occasional UV exposure. Melanoma is curable if recognized and treated early. Abnormal growths can be recognized using the ACBD rule:

A is for Asymmetry: A mole that has an irregular shape.

B is for Border: Irregular, blurred or rough edges.

C is for Color: Changes in the color or shade of a mole.

D is for Diameter: Moles larger than ¼ inch may be suspect.