

Hope & Healing

Skin Cancer Prevention

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Cancer of the skin is a process that begins in childhood. Each sun exposure adds a little to the risk. There are two common types of skin cancers caused by repeated sun exposure: basal cell cancers and malignant melanomas.

One of every eight Americans will develop a basal cell cancer. It occurs in both men and women, and even in those who are as young as twenty, although most cases are in older Americans.

The malignant melanoma is the more feared skin cancer because if it isn't found early it can spread to vital organs and cause death.

How the Malignant Melanoma Will Appear to You _____

It can be a mole that:

- gets larger or thicker or changes color.
- bleeds or won't heal.
- has irregular rather than round edges.
- is made up of different colors. The colors may be purplish, blue, or various shades of black.

How the Basal Cell Cancer Appears to You _____

It can be:

- A sore that hasn't healed and continues to crust, bleed, or ooze for longer than three weeks.
- A reddish patch that won't go away.
- A smooth bump, indented in the middle, like a tiny volcano crater. The borders will be rolled and have blood vessels on the surface.
- A shiny waxy spot with an irregular

border.

Preventing Skin Cancer _____

The major step to preventing skin cancer at any age is the use of sunscreens and protective clothing. This is especially true if you have fair skin and hair, light colored eyes, a lot of moles, a family history of skin cancer, an outdoor job, or tend to get sunburned easily.

Self-Examination _____

Once a month do an examination of your skin in a search for basal cell cancers or malignant melanomas. This takes about 15 minutes. You will need a well-lighted room, a full-length mirror, and a hand mirror.

Step 1. Undress completely. Scan your entire skin in search of changes in color, size or shape of birthmarks or moles or for any new ones. Then look for rough or waxy-looking patches, sores or scabs that are bleeding or crusted over or have not healed within two or three weeks.

Step 2. Begin a more careful examination at the scalp. Feel for bumps or rough spots, lift your hair and look over the skin underneath. Pay particular attention to bald spots.

Step 3. Look at your face and neck in the mirror. Check your ears and underneath your jaw and chin. If you have a beard, check beneath it.

Step 4. Examine hands and arms, all sides. Look for dark spots under your fingernails. These may be early signs of melanoma. Run your hands across your shoulders and arms to feel for rough spots you can't see.

Step 5. Use a hand mirror to examine the back of your neck and shoulders, your back, buttocks, and the backs of your legs.

Step 6. Look over your chest and abdomen in the mirror.

Step 7. Look carefully at the front of your thighs, legs, and feet. Be sure to check the bottoms of your feet and between your toes and look for dark spots under your toenails.

Treatment of Skin Cancer _____

The key to treatment is early removal. Be aware of what moles there are on your skin and have the doctor examine suspicious ones. The operation to remove skin cancers is done as an outpatient unless you wait until a mole gets too large. Larger moles may require more extensive surgery.

Is There a Safe Tan? _____

All tans damage the skin of light colored people. The sun's rays cause the skin to thicken and wrinkle and sag. Black people are less likely to get skin cancer and their skin doesn't wrinkle as much. So, they don't need sunscreens. The pigment that makes the skin black protects them from the ultraviolet rays. A lighter colored person who tans easily still needs sunscreens because their skin isn't dark enough to give adequate protection against ultraviolet rays.

Sunscreen Lotions, Creams and Oils _____

Sunscreens are labeled with a number, the sun protection factor or SPF number. Suppose you buy a sunscreen lotion labeled #8. If you ordinarily burn after about half an hour without sunscreen, with #8 sunscreen you can stay in the sun eight times as long, or four hours, and still not burn.

Actually, it's not quite that simple. Some sunscreens protect against the B type ultraviolet rays only. There are both A and B rays and both can cause skin damage, and you'll need to protect against both.

How to Select and Use a Sunscreen _____

- Choose a screen with SPF 15 or greater. Look for the seal of approval from the Skin Cancer Foundation. They evaluate the sun screens of SPF 15 and higher for effectiveness and safety.
- Apply the screen at least 30 to 45 minutes before sun exposure to allow penetration of the skin.
- Apply frequently and generously.
- Consider the time of day and your location. The ultraviolet rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and are more intense the closer you are to the equator or the higher you are in altitude.
- Check with your doctor about whether your medications can cause a reaction to sunlight or to sunscreen.
- If you're fair-skinned, consider wearing protective clothing, a hat, and a physical sunscreen like zinc oxide for lips, nose, and tips of ears.

Sunproof Clothing _____

Tightly woven cottons such as blue denim, dark needlecords, and dark cotton prints have a sun protection factor of more than 1,000. Nylon/polyester knits are not as effective.

Sunshine and Kids _____

Since the effects of ultraviolet radiation accumulate throughout life, it makes sense to protect children against sun damage. The following tips will help to reduce the lifetime risk of skin cancer during childhood exposure.

- Use long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and hats, especially for children with fair skin, blonde or red hair, and light eyes.
- Use a baby carriage or stroller with a canopy or hood or umbrella.
- Go to the sun in earlier morning or later afternoons.
- Check with your doctor about your child's medications.
- Use a sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher.

Summary _____

It is possible to enjoy the sun, to get the Vitamin D, and to benefit from the warmth and good feeling it gives without exposing ourselves to the risks of skin cancer. But, adequate protection is planned protection. Don't let a trip to the beach become a burning experience. Carry along the balls, the bats, the shovels, and pails, and of course, the sunscreen.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Resistance

Persistence pays when we are certain that the project we are doing has the right feel about it.

But, if not, don't force things. Stay flexible. Never make up your mind that a certain thing must be done and that it must be done now, unless you are comfortable that the project is right for you.

Forcing things says a lot about your will power, but it probably isn't smart and it isn't spiritual. Think about it. Is your project bringing unreal tension and discord into your life? Mental and physical pushing along the wrong road gets you further along the road. What good is that if you must back up?

Originality, our imaginations, and hard work will bring success. God gives the first two through prayer. The hard work is up to us. But, when things are right, they will flow smoothly without resistance.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.