



## **The Sun, Your Skin and Skin Cancer** **Facts About Skin Cancer You Might Not Know**

The previous Fall Report discussing skin tanning and sunburn talked about the increased risk of skin cancer as it relates to excess ultraviolet light exposure. In addition to that article, here are some little known facts:

- More than a million people in the U.S. will be diagnosed with skin cancer each year.
- One person dies every hour from skin cancer, primarily melanoma.
- There are more new cases of skin cancer each year than the combined incidence of cancers of the breast, prostate, lung, and colon.
- Melanoma is the most common cancer in women ages 25-29.
- The incidence of eye melanoma among white males increased 295% between 1973 and 1999.
- More than 90% of all skin cancers are caused by sun exposure.
- Melanoma accounts for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all deaths from skin cancer – over 7,900 American lives each year.
- The risk of melanoma has more than doubled in the past decade.
- Most skin cancers are diagnosed as basal cell carcinoma (most common), squamous cell carcinoma (second most common), and melanoma.
- Basal cell carcinoma affects 800,000 Americans each year. It may present as an open sore, a reddish patch or irritated area, a shiny bump or growth with a slightly elevated rolled border, or present as a scar-like area.
- These cancers do not commonly spread (metastasize) but may burrow deeply even through bone, a characteristic giving rise to its nickname – rodent ulcer.
- Squamous cell carcinoma afflicts more than 200,000 Americans each year. These cancers may spread and, if so, cause death. These carcinomas tend to occur where skin has suffered damage; i.e., burns, scars, long-standing chronic irritation, or exposure to x-ray or petroleum by products.

- Squamous cell carcinomas may present as a wart-like growth, a scaly red patch, an open sore, or an elevated growth with a central depression.
- Melanoma is the rarest of the three skin cancers, but also the most deadly. Over 51,000 new cases are reported each year.
- It may present as a flat or slightly raised discolored patch, tan, brown, or black in color, and borders tend to be irregular.
- Most skin cancers are curable with aggressive surgical therapy. With any changing skin lesion, seek the advice of your physician.
- Prevention is the key – avoid prolonged unprotected sun exposure.

So, enjoy our coming warm summer, but be kind to your skin.