



The Sun, Your Skin and Skin Cancer

A previously written Fall Report discussed skin tanning and sunburn and the increased risk of skin cancer as it relates to excess ultraviolet light exposure. 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.