

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is one of the most common types of cancer. Fortunately, it also is highly preventable, so learning how to protect yourself is very important.

Types of Skin Cancer

The three most common types are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. About 75 percent of all skin cancers are basal cell carcinomas, and 20 percent are squamous cell carcinomas. Both types are highly curable if caught early.

Although it accounts for only 4 percent of skin cancers, melanoma is the most serious form. Melanomas often are associated with atypical moles. They usually begin as brown or black blemishes with irregular borders that may turn shades of red, blue or white, and bleed. Signs of melanoma can be detected by using the “ABCDE” rule.

- **A**symmetry: Half the mole looks different than the other half.
- **B**order: The mole has irregular, ragged edges.
- **C**olor: There are different colors in or around the mole.
- **D**iameter: The mole is greater than one-fourth inch.
- **E**levation: The mole is raised.

Risk Factors

Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is one of the biggest risk factors associated with skin cancer. Sunlight is the main source of UV radiation. But, tanning lamps or beds also are sources. Other risk factors include:

- Fair skin
- Family history
- Increasing age

Protecting Yourself

The best way to prevent skin cancer is to avoid UV radiation as much as possible. Of course, there will be times when going out in the sun is unavoidable. The following tips can help you protect yourself.

- Avoid the sun when rays are strongest, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Use sunscreen every time you go outside, even if it's a cloudy winter day. Make sure it protects against both types of UV rays, UVA and UVB, and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- Wear tightly woven clothes, a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protective lenses.
- Don't use tanning beds or lamps.

If you see any changes in your skin or to your moles, see your doctor or dermatologist. Early detection is crucial.

If you have any questions about skin cancer or any other health-related concern, call Care24. Nurses are available 24 hours every day.

1-888-887-4114

TDD/TTY callers, please call the National Relay Center
at 1-800-855-2880 and ask for 1-888-887-4114.