



## SUMMER SKIN PROTECTION

This information is provided by the Department of Dermatology at the Medical University of South Carolina.

### ABOUT YOUR SKIN

The skin is the largest organ of the body, but it is often neglected and misunderstood.

**Melanoma** is the most serious form of skin cancer. Melanomas form in the pigment cells that produce skin color. Most begin in or near a preexisting mole or as a new dark spot. Most moles are **benign** (not cancer), but some may go on to become **malignant** (cancer).

It is especially important to **protect children from the sun**. Just one blistering sunburn **DOUBLES** your chance of getting **skin cancer!** Teaching healthy skin care habits to children increases the chance these habits will last into adulthood.

You are **more likely to develop skin cancer** if you have: a family history of skin cancer, fair skin and burn easily, a history of x-ray exposure, scars (including keloids), burns, or if you have been exposed to certain chemicals (like coal tar and arsenic).

### SELF SKIN EXAMS

**Get to know your skin.** Most skin cancers can be cured in the early stages, but can be deadly if they spread to other parts of the body. **Perform a skin self exam** every one to two months. Use a long mirror to examine your skin without any clothes on. Use a hand-held mirror to look at other places. When you know what your skin looks like, you'll recognize anything that is new or doesn't belong.

### SUN PROTECTION

Tanning and redness are signs that your skin is damaged, which leads to skin cancer and premature aging. Over-exposure to the sun is bad for everyone's skin. The sun contributes to the development of skin cancer (especially with lighter skin) and leads to wrinkling, age spots, dilated blood vessels, rashes, and skin color changes (especially in darker skin). While skin cancer is more prevalent in those with light skin, it does **occur in all races**.

In South Carolina, we get plenty of sun without even trying. The skin does produce Vitamin D, but it needs **very little sun** to produce all that it can. It is much safer to take a vitamin supplement if you need more Vitamin D.

### HOW TO PROTECT YOUR SKIN

- **Avoid midday sun** (10am - 3pm), even with sunscreen.
- **Use sunscreen every time** you are outdoors or driving, (at least SPF 15, broad spectrum).
- **Wear protective clothing** (large hat, sleeves and pants).
- **Seek the shade.**
- **Avoid tanning** and tanning beds.

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### Did you Know?

Melanoma is the 7th most common cancer diagnosed in South Carolina.

South Carolina ranks 42nd in the nation in melanoma deaths.

Between 1996 - 2001, a total of 544 melanoma deaths occurred in South Carolina.

Source: SC Facts and Figures, 2004-2005 - SCDHEC

### HOW TO USE SUNSCREEN

1. **Sunscreen does not replace sun avoidance.** Sunscreen does a good job of blocking burning rays, but it is not good at blocking the rays that cause aging and skin cancer.
2. **Use one ounce of sunscreen** (a shot glass) to cover your entire body. A four-ounce bottle should only last four applications.
3. **Apply 20-30 minutes before** going outside, even on cloudy days.
4. **Reapply regularly** (at least every two hours), even if it's "waterproof."
5. Don't forget your **lips, ears and nose** (and scalp if you're missing some hair).
6. **Put it on!** Studies show that it's never too late to start.

### SKIN CANCER

It is very important to notice changes in your skin growths. Use these steps to help recognize a melanoma from a normal mole:

- A-Asymmetry** One half of the mole does not match the other half.
- B-Border** The edges of the mole are irregular, ragged or notched.
- C-Color** The color over the mole is not the same.
- D-Diameter** The mole is wider than 6 millimeters (about 1/4 inch) or is growing larger.

The American Cancer Society Guidelines for the Early Detection of Melanoma:

- Ages 40+** Yearly skin exam by a health care professional and monthly self-examination.
- Ages 20-39** Skin exam by a health care professional every three years and monthly self-examination.

[www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org); [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org);  
South Carolina Facts and Figures, 2004-2005 - SCDHEC