

**WHAT'S ON THAT SKIN YOU'RE IN?  
GET TO KNOW YOUR ABC'S...  
(A GUIDE TO SKIN CANCER DETECTION)**

**QUICK FACTS:**

- ✓ Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer.
- ✓ The incidence of skin cancer is increasing!
- ✓ You are at much greater risk for skin cancer in your 20's and 30's than you are for breast cancer.
- ✓ More than 1 million new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year.
- ✓ There are 3 types of skin cancer: Basal Cell, Squamous Cell, and Melanoma.
- ✓ Among skin cancers, about 80% are Basal Cell, 16% Squamous Cell & 4% Melanoma.
- ✓ If detected & treated early, Basal and Squamous Cell cancers have a > 95% cure rate.
- ✓ **Melanoma** is the most serious form of skin cancer: 40,000 people will be diagnosed w/ melanoma this year, 7800 will die from it. One person dies from melanoma every hour.
- ✓ Melanoma is more common than *any* non-skin cancer among *women aged 25-29*.
- ✓ If detected early (BY YOUR SKIN EXAM), melanoma can usually be treated successfully.

**MELANOMA- IS THAT SUN TAN REALLY WORTH IT?**

- ✓ Melanoma is a cancer that begins in melanocytes- the skin cells responsible for producing the skin's coloration, or pigment, called *melanin*.
- ✓ With exposure to sunlight, the melanin in your skin increases causing darkening (tan).
- ✓ Melanoma occurs when the melanocytes grow out of control, producing lots of melanin while they're growing, which is why these cancers are shades of tan, brown, and black.
- ✓ Melanoma can cause death by spreading from the skin to vital internal organs and growing there, causing these organs to stop functioning properly.
- ✓ 70% of melanomas begin as a mole or other dark spot on the skin, but they also may arise from normal skin without warning. That's why it's important to know the color, size, and location of the moles on your body, so that you can monitor them for changes that may represent cancer.
- ✓ Melanoma generally begins as a mottled, light brown to black flat blemish with irregular borders. It may turn shades of red, blue or white, crust on the surface, and may bleed. Common locations are upper back, torso, lower legs, head and neck.
- ✓ Melanoma is linked to unprotected sun exposure, but also may run in families and develop in people who have minimal exposure to the sun.
- ✓ Although anyone can develop melanoma, sun exposure is the greatest risk factor, so do yourself a favor and wear sunscreen when outdoors, avoid sunbathing, and stay away from tanning beds (tans are out, anyway!).

**ENOUGH READING, START LOOKING!**

- ✓ Have a mirror handy (it's also fun if you have a partner handy).
- ✓ Examine your body front and back in the mirror, then left and right with arms raised.
- ✓ Bend elbows and look carefully at forearms, upper underarms and palms.
- ✓ Look at the backs of your legs and feet, the spaces between your toes, and on the soles.
- ✓ Examine the backs of your neck and scalp with a hand mirror. Part hair and look there, too.
- ✓ Finally, check your back and buttocks with a hand mirror, then examine closely the area between your legs (yes, skin cancers happen there, too).
- ✓ If you have many moles or even just a few, make a skin chart by writing down their location, color, size, and border (a diagram is helpful, too). A partner can help with this. Pictures are also a good idea, so that change can be realized by comparing pictures over time.

**OK, SO I FOUND THIS MOLE. NOW WHAT?**

- ✓ Follow the ABCD's of skin cancer detection.
- ✓ Report any lesion that is concerning to you to your doctor immediately!
- ✓ Look closely at the mole or lesion for the following:
  - **A = Asymmetry**-one half does not match the other half
  - **B = Borders**- the edges are irregular, ragged, or blurred
  - **C = Color**- is not uniform, with different shades of blue, black, red, etc.
  - **D = Diameter**- greater than 6mm (size of a pencil eraser) or an increase in size
  - **E = Early**- early detection is key and may save your life!

**HOW DO I AVOID THIS MESS? QUICK PREVENTION TIPS:**

- ✓ Avoid "peak" sunlight hours, 10am to 4pm, when sunlight is strongest
- ✓ Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 15 or higher at least 15-30 minutes before going outdoors. Reapply every two hours!
- ✓ Wear protective clothing, including wide-brimmed hats, sunglasses, and long sleeved shirt and pants during prolonged periods of sun exposure (besides, hats and shades are in, tans are out).
- ✓ Stay out of tanning booths- yes, they are still UV radiation, which is skin damaging, no matter what the ultra-tan lady working at the booth may say.
- ✓ Be cool, stay cool- seek out the shade!
- ✓ Get to know that skin you're in! Do a thorough skin check regularly!

Adapted from: American Cancer Society- "What You Should Know about Melanoma" (1-800-ACS-2345 or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)) and the American Academy of Dermatology Website @ [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org).

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