

Health and Wellness

Provided by Bethany Care Ministry Outreach Program



PROTECTION AGAINST **Skin Cancers**

It's finally time to be outside again and enjoy all Wisconsin has to offer in the summer. Don't forget to be liberal with your sunscreen in order to protect yourself from all three types of skin cancer and from aging your skin before its time. To protect against wrinkling, sunscreen should be labeled as UVA as well as UVB protective. Use at least a SPF-30 product and apply it thickly every two to three hours if in direct sunshine. Sunscreen should

be used even on a cloudy day, since ultraviolet rays penetrate clouds. They also come through the glass of the car window.

Skin cancers are of three types: basal cell, squamous cell, and melanoma.

Basal cell cancers are the most common kind. They usually do not spread to other areas and are fairly easily treated.

Squamous cell cancer is less common and may spread to other areas. This type often develops from lesions called actinic keratoses, which are caused by sun exposure and therefore occur most often on the head, neck, arms, and hands. The population most likely to develop these lesions are fair-haired, light-skinned, light-eyed groups. Norwegians, Danes, and Swedes are prime targets for this condition.

Melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer. It may start as a change in a mole or birthmark, or it may arise from normal skin. It may look like a brown or black mole but may have other colors such as red or purple in it. Melanoma must be caught quickly in order to have a good outcome. Some types spread more rapidly than others. Melanoma can occur in places not usually suspected for malignancies. For example, it can occur as a dark spot in the eye or on the bottom of the foot or as a dark streak under a nail. Tanning booths are causing an increase in melanoma among young people.

Check your skin regularly for lesions and keep track of any changes. Be sure to have someone check your back if you can't see it well with a mirror. Ask your doctor to check any suspicious lesions if he or she doesn't check all of your skin. Being your own skin detective could save your life.

Be suspicious of a mole or skin lesion if it behaves according to the "ABCDE" rules:

Asymmetry - having one side not look like the other.
Border - having an irregular or bumpy border.
Color - not uniform in color.
Diameter - larger than the eraser on the end of a pencil.
Evolving - has changed in appearance.

Carolyn Davis, RN, MS
Bethany Community Care Ministry

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