

SKIN CANCER

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Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. There are two main kinds of skin cancer: Melanoma (deadliest type of skin cancer) and Non-Melanoma (e.g. Basal Cell and Squamous Cell). Risk factors for skin cancer include a family or personal history of skin cancer, tendency to freckle or burn easily, many sunburns as a child, a lot of sun exposure throughout your life, exposure to certain chemicals, Human papilloma virus (HPV), chronic wounds, radiation therapy, or use of drugs that affect the immune system. Performing monthly full-body skin self-exams in front of a full-length mirror is the best way to detect possible skin cancer. You should check for unusual skin colors, abnormal appearing moles, or other suspicious skin changes. Ask your spouse or a family member to check hard to see areas.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES INCLUDE:

- Apply a sunscreen to dry skin 15 minutes before going outdoors. Water-resistant sunscreens with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) rating of 30 or greater help to protect the skin from sunburn, early skin aging, and skin cancer.
- Reapply a sunscreen every two hours or after swimming or sweating heavily to all exposed skin.
- Wear sun protective clothing and avoid sun exposure from 10 AM to 3 PM year around when rays are strongest.
- Exercise extra caution near sand, snow, or water as they reflect the damaging rays of the sun that can increase the chance of sunburn. Even on cloudy days, up to 80% of the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays can enter the skin.
- Avoid tanning beds. UV light from tanning beds also can cause skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look tan, consider using a self-tanning product along with a sunscreen.
- Skin cancer can form on the lips. Use a lip balm that contains sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher.
- Avoid sun exposure and do not use sunscreens on infants younger than 6 months of age.
- Use UV-protective sunglasses and select hats with front and back flaps.
- Seek shady areas to provide protection from the sun's rays as well.
- If you are taking antibiotics or other medications, ask your doctor if it may increase your skin's sensitivity to the sun.

MEDICAL CARE & TREATMENT OPTIONS:

If you develop sunburn or notice anything changing, growing, or bleeding on the skin please call your Osteopathic Family Physician. Skin cancer is treatable when caught early. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor or 911 right away.

SOURCE(S): American Academy of Dermatology, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Skin Cancer.gov.

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