



# SKIN CANCER PREVENTION

## Fact Sheet

### In California

In 2009, it is expected that there will be 7,280 new cases of melanoma diagnosed and 840 attributable deaths. Incidence rates of both in situ and invasive melanoma of the skin have increased in the past 16 years for all racial/ethnic groups, a statistically significant increase for Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites. When melanoma is diagnosed and treated at an early stage (localized), the five-year relative survival rate is 94%, whereas only 14% with late stage (distant) diagnosis. (ACS, California Facts and Figures 2009)

### Sun Safety Is Important!

Did you know that childhood sunburns can increase the risk of developing skin cancer as an adult? Even a suntan is harmful. Sunburns and tanning hurt the skin and serve as outward signs of internal skin damage.

Sunlight causes 90 percent of all non-melanoma skin cancer. The number of skin cancer cases has dramatically risen, especially in the last three to four decades because:

- Modern clothing exposes more skin
- Tanning is falsely viewed as healthy
- Diminishing ozone, high in the sky, that partially protects the earth's surface from receiving UV rays
- General aging of the population
- Many people have moved to sunnier states

Since sunlight is the major cause of skin cancer, parents should protect children from too much sunshine. That's because up to 50 percent of a person's lifetime contact with sunlight occurs during childhood and adolescence. Childhood sun exposure plays a significant role in skin cancer development in adulthood.

### Three Major Forms of Skin Cancer

The three major forms of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and the deadliest form – malignant melanoma. BCC and SCC often appear as a pale, wax-like, pearly bump or a red, scaly, sharply outlined patch. Skin cancer can develop anywhere on the body but most often it appears on surfaces receiving the most sunlight.

Malignant melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer. It often arises from or near a mole. You should see your doctor (especially a dermatologist) if you have a mole or growth that has one or more of these features:

- If divided in half, the two resulting parts would have different shapes
- It has two or more colors (which may be mixed together)
- It has jagged or rough edges
- It is wider than a standard pencil eraser

Melanoma often appears on parts of the body not regularly exposed to sunlight. While light-skinned people have a greater risk of getting melanoma, this disease is increasing among people of color.

Cover up!



Seek shade!



Put on sunscreen!



Wear UV-protective sunglasses!



Wear a hat!





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## Skin Cancer Risk Factors & Conditions

Any person, regardless of skin color, can get skin cancer. Individuals most likely to get skin cancer will tend to have one or more of these characteristics:

- Fair skin
- Blue, green, or hazel eyes
- Light-colored hair
- Freckles
- A tendency to burn rather than tan
- A history of severe sunburns
- Have many moles (over 50)
- A personal or family history of skin cancer.
- Outdoor worker

UV rays linked to skin cancer development are more intense (destructive) under certain time frames or conditions:

- From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Lack of thick cloud cover
- From mid-spring through mid-fall
- At higher altitudes

## Sun Safety Tips

Parents are encouraged to model the following behaviors to set a good example for their children. Sun-protective behaviors should be practiced in all outdoor settings, not just at the beach, lake, or pool:

- Reduce sun exposure from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when UV rays are strongest. (This is especially important from mid-spring through mid-fall.)
- Wear sunglasses that include a warranty stating that they provide 99–100 percent UVA and UVB (broad-spectrum) protection.
- Wear tightly-woven, loose-fitting clothing that covers as much of the body as possible.
- Liberally apply sunscreen to exposed skin 15 minutes before going outdoors. The sunscreen container should specify a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or above and should state that it provides broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB) protection. Depending on outdoor conditions, sunscreen should be reapplied at least every two hours.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat (at least 4-inch brim) that produces a shadow that covers the eyes, nose, face, ears, and neck.
- Stay under shade (trees, physical structures), especially from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Shade tip: Parents, at home move play equipment like swing sets and other fixed recreation items in your yard to places protected by shade.
- Use lip balm with a SPF of 15 or greater.
- Avoid tanning salons, booths, and sunlamps.

**CAUTION!** Don't depend on sunscreen alone to protect you from skin cancer. Instead, rely as much as possible on a combination of all the tips listed.

Finally, the good news is that most skin cancer can be successfully treated if detected in its earlier stages. Of course the best "treatment", is PREVENTION. Learn more about preventing skin cancer by visiting [www.AvoidSkinCancer.com](http://www.AvoidSkinCancer.com).