

## Incidence of Skin Cancer

The skin is the largest organ of the body. Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. It accounts for nearly half of all cancers in the United States. In 2022 it is estimated that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Approximately 9,500 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with skin cancer every day. Research estimates that nonmelanoma skin cancer (NMSC), including basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), affects more than 3 million Americans a year. Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas, the two most common forms of skin cancer, are highly treatable if detected early and treated properly.

Melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer. The five-year survival rate for people whose melanoma is detected and treated before it spreads to the lymph nodes is 99%. The five-year survival rate for melanoma that spreads to nearby lymph nodes is 68%. The five-year survival rate for melanoma that spreads to distant lymph nodes and other organs is 30%. Nearly 20 Americans die from melanoma every day in 2022.

**It is estimated that melanoma will affect 1 in 27 men and 1 in 40 women in their lifetime.**

### *Common Types of Skin Cancer:*

- **Basal and squamous cell skin cancers** are classified as non-melanomas. Most non-melanomas skin cancers develop on sun-exposed areas of the body (face, ear, neck, lips, and the backs of the hands). Dependent on the type, they can be fast or slow growing but rarely spread to other parts of the body. Basal cell or squamous cell cancers are highly likely to be cured if found and treated early.
- **Melanoma** is a cancer that begins in the melanocytes – the cells that produce the skin coloring or pigment known as melanin. Melanin helps protect the deeper layers of the skin from the harmful effects of the sun. Although melanoma accounts for only a small percentage of skin cancer, it is far more dangerous than other skin cancers and causes most skin cancer deaths.

## What are the risk factors for skin cancer?

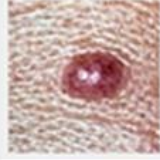







- **Unprotected and/or excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation** (sunlight or tanning booths)
- **Pale complexion** (difficulty tanning, easily sunburned, natural red or blond hair color)
- **Occupational exposures** to coal tar, pitch, creosote, arsenic compounds, or radium
- **Family history**
- **Multiple or unusual moles**
- **Severe sunburns in the past**

## What are the signs and symptoms of skin cancer?

Skin cancer can be found early, and both doctors and patients play important roles in finding skin cancer. If you have any of the following symptoms, tell your doctor.

- **Any change on your skin**, especially in the size or color of a mole, growth, or spot, or a new growth (even if it has no color)
- **Scaly, oozing, bleeding, or change in the appearance of a bump or nodule**

- **Spread of pigmentation (color) beyond its border**, such as dark coloring that spreads past the edge of a mole or mark
- **Change in sensation**, such as itchiness, tenderness, or pain

Normal Mole	Melanoma	Sign	Characteristic
		Asymmetry	when half of the mole does not match the other half
		Border	when the border (edges) of the mole are ragged or irregular
		Color	when the color of the mole varies throughout
		Diameter	if the mole's diameter is larger than a pencil's eraser

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## Can skin cancer be prevented?

The best ways to lower the risk of non-melanoma skin cancer are to avoid long exposure to intense sunlight and practice sun safety. You can still exercise and enjoy the outdoors while using sun safety at the same time. Here are some ways to be sun safe:

- **Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.**
- **Seek shade:** Look for shade, especially in the middle of the day when the sun's rays are strongest. Practice the shadow rule and teach it to children. If your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are at their strongest.
- **SLIP on a shirt:** Cover up with protective clothing to guard as much skin as possible when you are out in the sun. Choose comfortable clothes made of tightly woven fabrics that you cannot see through when held up to a light.
- **SLOP on sunscreen:** Use sunscreen and lip balm with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Apply a generous amount of sunscreen (about a palmful) and reapply every 2 hours and after swimming, toweling dry, or sweating. Use sunscreen even on hazy or overcast days.
- **SLAP on a hat:** Cover your head with a wide-brimmed hat, shading your face, ears, and neck. If you choose a baseball cap, remember to protect your ears and neck with sunscreen.
- **WRAP on sunglasses:** Wear sunglasses with 99% to 100% UV absorption to provide optimal protection for the eyes and the surrounding skin.

Follow these practices to protect your skin even on cloudy or overcast days. UV rays travel through clouds.

- Avoid other sources of UV light. Tanning beds and sun lamps are dangerous. They also damage your skin in other ways.

**Remember: SLIP-SLOP- SLAP-WRAP!**

**If you have any questions about this topic, please reach out to CompassionLink at [info@compassionlink.org](mailto:info@compassionlink.org). We will be happy to answer your questions.**

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**Sources:**

<http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/SkinCancer-BasalandSquamousCell/index?ssSourceSiteId=null>

<http://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/skin.html>

<https://www.aad.org/media/stats-skin-cancer>