



OLV HEALTH & WELLNESS MINISTRY

June 2016 Article

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. More than 2 million people will be diagnosed with this cancer (including 68,000 melanomas) and about 12,000 will die. Everyone is at risk.

There are three types of skin cancer:

- Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas—are highly curable, but can be disfiguring and costly.
- Melanoma, the third most common skin cancer, is more dangerous and causes the most deaths.

Ultraviolet (UV) Light

Most skin cancer is caused by overexposure to UV radiation. Ultraviolet rays are an invisible kind of radiation that comes from the sun, tanning beds and sunlamps. UV rays can penetrate and change skin cells. Damaging UV rays fall into two categories, Ultraviolet (UVA), and Ultraviolet B (UVB):

- **UVA:** These long-wave rays penetrate beyond the top layer of skin and play a major part in skin aging and wrinkling. They are equally intense during daylight hours all year long and can penetrate clouds and glass.
- **UVB:** These short-wave rays penetrate less deeply into the skin and are the main cause of skin reddening and sunburn. They are most plentiful between 10 a.m.-4 p.m., from April to October. They can cause skin damage year-round, particularly at high altitudes or reflected off snow or ice.

Factors Influencing Your Risk of Skin Cancer:

- Excessive, unprotected exposure to UV light, such as sunlight and tanning beds.
- Fair skin; blond or red hair; blue, green or grey eyes.
- History of working with coal tar, pitch creosote, arsenic compounds or radium; outdoor workers.
- Personal or family history; one or more sunburns as a child.
- Abnormal or more than 100 moles as an adult, 50 if under the age of 20.
- Certain prescription or over-the-counter drugs, such as, antibiotics, painkillers, acne medications and diuretics.

Symptoms:

- Change in the number, size, color or surface of a mole.
- Pigmentation that spreads past the edge of a mole.
- Moles with itchiness, tenderness or pain.

Prevention:

- Full-body skin exam yearly, and monthly self-exams.
- Avoid sun at its strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Wear protective clothing and UV blocking sunglasses.
- Use sunscreen with (SPF) of 30. Apply 30 minutes before going outside, reapply every 2 hours.
- Avoid sun lamps, tanning beds and sunburns.

References: www.cdc.gov/cancertopics/. J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc., May, 2016.