

# Get Screened: Early Detection Is The Key To Successful Skin Cancer Treatment

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The bad news: Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers, accounting for 40% of all carcinoma diagnoses. More than 1.6 million new cases of skin cancer were diagnosed last year, resulting in the death of more than 11,000 people.

The good news: Most skin cancers-even melanoma, the most serious form-can be treated successfully if detected early. To this end, the American Cancer Society recommends a skin examination as part of periodic checkups for people age 20 and older. Even better than treatable, nearly all skin cancers are preventable by limiting unprotected exposure to the sun.

## Skin Cancer Facts & Figures

There are three types of skin cancers: basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma. Statistics show that men are twice as likely to have basal cell cancers and three times more likely to have squamous cell cancers. Melanoma accounts for about 4% of all cancers in both men and women, yet it is responsible for approximately 80% of all skin cancer deaths.

Because of the protective effect of skin pigment, Caucasians are ten times more likely to develop skin cancers than African-Americans. For the same reason, the risk is especially high for people with fair skin that freckles or burns easily.

"While living in a coastal environment has its advantages, people living in southeastern North Carolina need to be especially vigilant about sun exposure," said Charles Kays, MD, of Wilmington Plastic Surgery. "Not only are the sun's rays the primary cause of skin cancer, they are the leading cause of premature aging. Protecting your skin can help you live longer, and look younger."

## Free, No-Excuses Skin Cancer Screenings

Dr. Kays pointed out that because early detection is key to a favorable prognosis, Wilmington Plastic Surgery holds annual skin cancer screenings absolutely free to the public. The practice is offering these free screenings by appointment only during the week of June 8, 2009. "We do this as a public service because it's important to the health of our community," said Dr. Kays. "Additionally, some people who have a suspicious mole that requires biopsy prefer to have a plastic surgeon make an incision, especially if it's in a highly visible area."

## Stop It Before It Starts

The American Cancer Society recommends limiting or avoiding sun exposure during the peak midday hours of 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Another ACS-recommended method of prevention is known as "Slip! Slop! Slap! Wrap!" It's a catchy way to remember to:

- Slip on a shirt (long sleeves; for greater protection, add long pants)
- Slop on sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- Slap on a hat (shading the face, neck and ears)
- Wrap on sunglasses

Additionally, monthly skin self-exams are encouraged as a proactive way to catch melanoma at its earliest stage possible. Following the simple ABCD rules, check moles and other skin markings for:

- Asymmetry
- Border irregularity
- Color
- Diameter greater than 6 mm

As a rule, any change (size, shape or color) of a mole is a major warning sign and is sufficient reason to be checked by a doctor.

So if you're smart about the sun and keep your eye out for changes to your skin, you'll preserve both your health and your looks.

And that's the best news of all.

Source

**American Cancer Society**

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/150430.php>