



# The Core

## Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month

With summer fast approaching, it is important to realize the damage that big ball of fire can do to human skin. Although many types of skin cancer exist, there are three to which we need to pay particularly close attention:

**melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma.**

**MELANOMA:** Those most at risk include people with fair skin and a past history of significant sunburns; much evidence points to an inherited component as well. Metastatic spread occurs most frequently in lung, liver, and brain. Survival from melanoma metastases is extremely low.

**BASAL CELL CARCINOMA (BCC):** Like melanoma, this type of cancer progresses due to environmental and genetic components. Although not metastatic like melanoma, it is very aggressive; it is locally invasive, aggressive, and destructive of skin and the surrounding structures, including bone.

**SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA (SCC):** Again, the primary culprit is ultraviolet radiation from the sun, but those with a family history are more susceptible. SCC does have the potential to spread to the lymph nodes and seed itself anywhere in the human body, but it, too, is locally invasive and damaging.

## EARLY DETECTION AND PREVENTION IS YOUR BEST DEFENSE!

Specifically, ensure self skin exams (SSE) are being conducted at regular intervals. Find someone you trust to exam hard-to-see places. Pay very close attention to lesions (or moles) that appear to be changing in size or color. Itching and bleeding are also ominous signs and reasons to seek medical care. This is particularly important for people with fair skin, a significant family history of skin cancer, and those with any previous history of malignant lesions.

A trip to the doctor for your annual exam is a good reason to have a skin survey conducted. This allows the physician to inventory any suspicious lesions. Those moles deemed worrisome can then be removed for pathological evaluation, or the ones that need to be examined during your SSE can be noted.

If caught early enough, a **cure** can be realized with excision of the lesion. Please protect yourself from the sun and heed the **ABCDs** that are the hallmarks in aiding early detection. The SSE and prevention techniques are discussed below.

## SKIN CANCER DETECTION AND PREVENTION MONTH

Although skin cancer is the most common type of cancer, many are unaware of, or choose to ignore, its signs. Treating skin cancer is relatively easy and successful, especially in comparison to other forms of the disease; early detection is the crucial component of successful treatment. To start, search your body top to bottom and front to back, initially judging birthmarks, moles, and others markings for the **ABCDs of skin cancer:**

**ASYMMETRY**—half of the marking does not match the other.

**BORDER**—the marking has irregular edges.

**COLOR**—is inconsistent throughout the marking, and may be brown or black with flecks of red, blue, or white.

**DIAMETER**—of the marking is greater than six millimeters *or* it has grown since last checked.

**ALSO LOOK FOR:**

New growths.

Scabs or sores that do not heal.

Redness, swelling, or pigmentation beyond the border of a marking.

Change in the sensation (itching, burning, etc.) or the surface (oozing, bumps, etc.) of a marking.

## PREVENT SKIN CANCER DEVELOPMENT

**LIMIT SUN EXPOSURE MIDDAY.** The sun's rays do the most harm between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

**COVER SKIN** by wearing long sleeves, pants, and a hat with a two-to three-inch brim. Darker, tightly woven garments offer the most protection. Drink plenty of water to stay cool and hydrated.

**LATHER ON SUNSCREEN OF AT LEAST SPF 15 EVERY TWO HOURS**

**ANYTIME YOU ARE OUTDOORS.** The sun even causes damage in the early morning and evening hours, as well as overcast days. Reapply sunscreen more frequently if in the water or sweating. Be generous!

**WEAR SUNGLASSES THAT BLOCK UVA AND UVB RAYS.** Even inexpensive glasses will do the trick, so long as they are labeled, "UV absorption up to 400 nm".