

Skin Cancer

While skin cancer is the most common form of cancer, many cases are easily preventable by limiting exposure to the sun's harmful rays and avoiding indoor tanning. Basal cell and squamous cell are the most common skin cancer types and are highly curable if caught early. Texas ranks fourth in the nation for newly diagnosed cases of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

Statistics

- Twenty percent of Americans will develop skin cancer by the age of 70.
- In 2020, an estimated 4,092 melanoma cases will be diagnosed in Texas, with approximately 577 deaths.
- Those who have ever used indoor tanning beds are 83 percent more likely to be diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma, and 29 percent more likely to be diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma.

Risk Factors

- **Ultraviolet (UV) Light Exposure:** Sunlight is the primary source of UV radiation.
- **Indoor Tanning:** Sun lamps and tanning beds emit UV radiation, which can cause skin damage and skin cancer.
- **Family History:** Those with a family history of melanoma have an increased risk for the disease.
- **Personal History:** Those with a personal history of skin cancer or sunburns, especially burns early in life, a large number of moles, skin that burns, freckles, or reddens with ease, or skin that is painful in the sun are at a higher risk.
- **Fair Skin:** People with fair skin are at a higher risk of developing skin cancer, especially fair-skinned individuals with freckles, blue or green eyes, and red, blond, or light brown hair. However, everyone is at risk of developing skin cancer and should take precautions. In fact, though melanoma is less frequently diagnosed among African Americans, Latinos, and Asians than Caucasians, it is frequently found in late stages and is often fatal for these populations. Everyone should seek annual skin cancer screenings with a physician.

Symptoms and Signs

The most common warning sign of skin cancer is a change in the surface of the skin. It is important to have any change in a mole or spot on the skin that has changed checked by a dermatologist. The ABCDE rule can be a guide when checking your skin.

- **A = Asymmetry:** One side of the mole is different from the other in size, shape, or color.
- **B = Border:** The edge or border of the mole is not smooth.
- **C = Color:** The color of the mole contains various shades of tan, brown, black, or in some instances red, white, or blue.
- **D = Diameter:** Skin cancer melanomas are usually larger than 6 millimeters in diameter, but they can be smaller.
- **E = Evolving:** The mole changes over time or develops new symptoms, such as bleeding, crusting, or itching.

Tips for Prevention

- **Limit Exposure:** Avoid being outdoors in sunlight too long, particularly between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when UV light is strongest, and avoid indoor tanning.
- **Protect Your Skin:** Tightly-woven, long-sleeved shirts and long pants or skirts are the most protective. Use a broad-spectrum (protects against both UVA and UVB rays), water-resistant sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher on areas of skin exposed to the sun. Reapply every two hours or according to the product label. Water-resistant sunscreens need to be reapplied every 40 or 80 minutes, according to the product label. Use sunscreen on days with light or broken cloud cover, as UV light still permeates.
- **Wear a Hat:** A hat with a wide brim can protect areas exposed to the sun's rays, such as the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp. Straw hats may allow UV rays through, so choose a hat with a tight weave.
- **Wear Sunglasses:** Wrap-around sunglasses with UV absorption provide the best protection for the eyes and the skin around the eyes. Look for sunglasses labeled as blocking both UVA and UVB light.

Treatment Options

Basal cell and squamous cell cancers can often be completely cured by minor surgery or local treatments. The type of treatment depends on the size, location, and type of cancer. For certain squamous cell cancers with a high risk of spreading, surgery might be followed by radiation or chemotherapy. Immunotherapy and targeted therapy are also used to treat skin cancer.

Sources: American Academy of Dermatology, American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Cancer Institute, Skin Cancer Foundation, and Texas Cancer Registry



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