

Skin care tips

Taking in the sun without any protection can lead to problems — from dry skin and wrinkles to skin cancer. If it is not discovered and treated early, skin cancer can spread throughout the body and may be fatal.

There are three types of skin cancer — and each one has a very different treatment and prognosis.

Basal cell carcinomas

80 percent of all skin cancers



- · Most easily treated
- Usually pearly, slow-growing, raised areas that may crust and bleed
- Occur mostly on the face, neck and hands

Squamous cell carcinomas

16 percent of all skin cancers



- Easily treated if found early
- Appear as red or pink, scaly bumps on the face, hands and ears

Malignant melanomas

4 percent of all skin cancers



- Most serious skin cancer; can be fatal, but treatable if found early
- Begins as dark brown or flat black spot; may later change in shape or color
- · May grow from a mole



Check your skin

Skin cancer often appears on the trunk of men and on the legs of women. Keep an eye on moles and skin growths to look for warning signs of skin cancer. Here's what to look for:

- Asymmetry: One half doesn't match the other half.
- Border irregularity: The edges are ragged, notched or blurred.
- **Color:** The pigmentation is not uniform. Shades of tan, brown and black are present. Dashes of red, white and blue add to the mottled appearance. Color may spread from the edge of a mole into the surrounding skin.
- **Diameter:** The size of the mole is greater than 6 mm (0.2 in.), or about the size of a pencil eraser.
- **Evolution:** There is a change in the size, shape, symptoms (such as itching or tenderness), surface (especially bleeding) or color of a mole.

Be smart about sun

Here are some tips to safely enjoy the sun:

- Choose tightly-woven clothing made of thick material, like unbleached cotton, polyester, wool, or silk that covers as much of the skin as possible
- Stick to dark clothing that has sun protection factor (SPF) in the fabric that does not wash out
- Wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, summer and winter, on both cloudy and clear days
- Apply sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB radiation to all exposed skin, including lips, ears, back of the hands and neck
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going in the sun, and reapply it every two hours and after swimming, exercising or sweating
- Wear wraparound sunglasses that block at least 99 percent of UVA and UVB radiation
- Be careful when you are on sand, snow or water, because these surfaces can reflect 85 percent of the sun's rays
- Avoid artificial sources of UVA radiation, including sunlamps and tanning booths
- Keep babies younger than six months shielded from the sun
- Stay out of the sun during the peak hours of UV radiation, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Take charge of your skin health — get on the path to a healthier you.

Source: Healthwise, Incorporated. Available at www.healthwise.net/aetna.

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