

# FOCUS<sub>on</sub>health

SPRING, 2017

*Physicians Caring for Kentucky*

## A TAN IS A SIGN YOUR SKIN HAS BEEN INJURED

The American Academy of Dermatology stresses that a tan is a sign of skin damage. Every time you expose your skin to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays or visit an indoor tanning salon, your skin is damaged. It not only speeds the aging of your skin, it also increases your risk for all types of skin cancer, including melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

The Skin Cancer Foundation ([www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org)) defines skin cancer as "the uncontrolled growth of abnormal skin cells. It occurs when unrepaired DNA damage to skin cells (most often caused by ultraviolet radiation from sunshine or tanning beds) triggers mutations, or genetic defects, that lead the skin cells to multiply rapidly and form malignant tumors."

The Skin Cancer Foundation lists six forms of skin cancer or pre-cancer:

**Actinic Keratosis (AK):** This crusty, scaly growth is caused by damage from exposure to ultraviolet radiation and is pre-cancerous. It usually appears on sun-exposed areas, like the face, bald scalp, ears, shoulders, neck, and back of the hands and forearms.

**Atypical Moles:** These moles look unusual but are typically benign. Atypical moles may resemble melanoma and can put people who have them at higher risk of developing melanoma. About 2 to 8 percent of Caucasians have these moles.

**Basal Cell Carcinoma:** These uncontrolled growths or lesions arise in the skin's basal cells, which line the deepest layer of the epidermis, and are the most frequently occurring form of skin cancer. They often look like open sores, red patches, pink growths, shiny bumps or scars. Usually a result of cumulative and intense sun exposure.

**Melanoma:** This most dangerous form of skin cancer develops when unrepaired DNA damage to skin cells—caused by ultraviolet radiation from the sun or tanning beds—triggers mutation that leads skin cells to multiply rapidly and form malignant tumors. Melanoma kills one in nine patients.

**Merkel Cell Carcinoma:** This rare, aggressive form of skin cancer is at high risk to recur and spread throughout the body. It kills one in three patients.

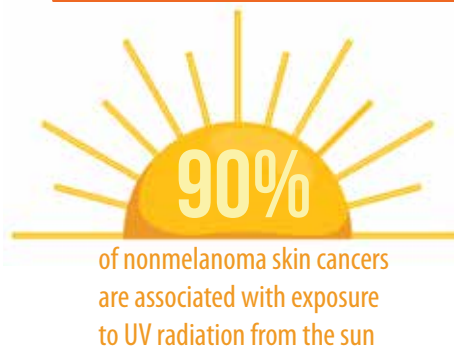
**Squamous Cell Carcinoma:** This second most common form of skin cancer is an uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells arising in the squamous cells, which compose the skin's upper layers. They look like scaly red patches, open sores, elevated growths with a central depression or warts.

### Fast Facts about Skin Health

**13<sup>th</sup>** Kentucky's rank in the incidence of melanoma, with 24.3 cases out of 100,000 people.

**4<sup>th</sup>** Kentucky's rank in the melanoma deaths, with 3.4 per 100,000 people.

*2013 data from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention*



#### More on Melanoma

Melanoma accounts for less than 1% of skin cancer cases, but most deaths from skin cancer. The sun is to blame for most melanomas, with one study finding 86% of melanomas can be attributed to exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

More than **5.4 million** cases of nonmelanoma skin cancers are treated in more than **3.3 million** people in the U.S. each year.

#### Skin aging

- 90% of skin aging is caused by the sun.
- Daily sunscreen use shows 24 percent less skin aging.
- Only 23% of lifetime sun exposure occurs by age 18.



Source: The Skin Cancer Foundation

# BE SAFE IN THE SUN

## PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HARMFUL RAYS

### GET IN THE SHADE

Sun damage adds up. Only about 23 percent of lifetime exposure occurs by age 18.

### TRY NOT TO BURN

Your risk for melanoma doubles if you have had more than five sunburns.

### AVOID TANNING BEDS & BOOTHS

Tanning indoors increases your risk of developing skin cancers:

- 67% increased risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma
- 29% increased risk of developing basal cell carcinoma
- 34% increased risk of developing melanoma

### COVER UP

Clothing absorbs or blocks much of the harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. The more skin you cover, the safer you are.

### USE SUNSCREEN

A broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher should be worn every day. For longer periods outdoors, use an SPF of 30 or higher. Regular use can reduce the risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma by 40 percent and the risk of developing melanoma by 50 percent.

### APPLY SUNSCREEN EARLY AND OFTEN

To get the full benefits, apply about 1 ounce 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply every two hours. Don't be fooled by the clouds or cold—you still need sunscreen or you could get an even more serious sunburn.

### PROTECT BABIES

Keep newborns out of the sun and use sunscreen on babies over age 6 months. Melanoma makes up 3 percent of all pediatric cancers.

### SELF-EXAMINE

Each month, check for any new or changing lesions that might be cancerous or pre-cancerous. Skin cancers are almost always curable when found and removed early.

### SEE YOUR PHYSICIAN

Get a professional skin exam each year. One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetimes.

Tips from the Skin Cancer Foundation: [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org)

