

## Skin Cancer

Skin Cancers are the most frequently occurring of all neoplasm's. They represent 30% to 40% of all cancers. There are three major types of skin cancer. They are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and malignant melanoma.

### Risk factors of skin cancer include:

1. Light skinned, blue or gray eyed people with red or blond hair that freckle or burn easily.
2. Chronic exposure to sunlight
3. People with history of previous skin disease or allergies have a higher incidence of malignancy.

Most skin cancers usually develop in skin areas having long term exposure to the sun, these include head and neck, back, forearms, and hands.

Basal Cell Carcinoma is the most common form of skin cancer affecting 800,000 Americans each year. Most often affected are older people, particularly men who have worked outside. In the beginning stages of basal cell carcinoma they appear as waxy clear pearly bumps. Dilated blood vessels are usually present in and around the lesion. Sometimes it resembles non-cancerous skin conditions such as psoriasis or eczema and there may be burning and itching at the site.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma occurs less frequently than basal cell carcinoma and afflicts more than 200,000 people. They are flesh-colored, firm, slowly growing nodules or ulcerations. It may however, be seen as a scaly, reddish brown plaque with an underlying indention with uneven borders. Squamous cell carcinoma may also occur where the skin has had certain kinds of injury such as burns, scars and sites exposed to certain chemicals.

Malignant Melanoma is the least common form of primary skin cancer, however, it is the most dangerous because it spreads rapidly and resists treatment. This melanoma occurs more frequently in males than females and is mainly a disease of Caucasians, although it does occasionally occur in African Americans.

### Signs of Melanoma:

1. Most moles are round and even, if you placed a line through the middle of a melanoma it would not have matching halves they would be uneven.
2. Borders of melanoma usually have scalloped or notched edges.
3. The beginning of a melanoma may be in varying shades of brown, tan or black and may progress to red, white or blue.
4. Early melanomas tend to grow larger than common moles - usually to the size of a pencil eraser.

Protect yourself by avoiding the sun as much as possible or if you are out use a sunscreen or wear hats, etc. Examine your skin regularly once a month if you are at high risk. Using a full length or hand held mirror could be useful for a thorough examination of your skin. If you observe changes in your skin notify your physician immediately.

**This page is in no way meant to treat emergency medical conditions. If you currently have a medical emergency, please call your doctor, 911, or your areas local emergency service telephone number.**