

Melanoma Prevention and the Importance of UV Protection Being Careful About Sun Exposure Can Save Your Life

Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer, most often caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays from sunshine or tanning beds that lead to the formation of malignant tumors.

Melanoma (sometimes called malignant melanoma) is highly curable when it is discovered early, but is much more likely than other forms of skin cancer to spread if left untreated. It begins in melanocytes, which are specialized skin cells that produce a brown pigment called melanin. These cells darken when exposed to the sun, a protective response to protect the deeper layers of the skin from the sun's harmful effects.

RISK FACTORS

While melanoma only accounts for about one percent of all skin cancers, it accounts for the vast majority of skin cancer deaths. Risk factors include a weakened immune system, fair skin or having a large number of moles, as well as family history.

But the most common cause of melanoma is exposure to UV light. A history of sunburns, particularly during childhood, or excessive exposure to sunlight, may increase an individual's likelihood of developing melanoma.

PREVENTION TIPS

- Always seek the shade, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Do not allow your skin to burn.
- Avoid tanning and UV tanning beds.
- Cover up with clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses.
- Use a broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day. For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant, broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Apply sunscreen to your entire body 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours or immediately after swimming or excessive sweating.
- Examine your skin from head-to-toe for moles every month.

With your Best Doctors benefits, a meticulous review of your medical case gives you an easy-to-understand report that either confirms your diagnosis and treatment or recommends a change. If you have concerns about melanoma or the effect of UV rays, Best Doctors is your one-stop shop for eliminating uncertainty and getting additional guidance on your health and wellness.

For more information, visit bestdoctors.com/members.