Reducing the Risk of Skin Cancer

The American Cancer Society and
Congregational Health Ministry Team

April Module

To access this module via the Web,
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type in congregational health ministry in the search box.

TOPIC: Reducing the Risk of Skin Cancer

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TOPIC: Reducing the Risk of Skin Cancer

OVERVIEW

TALKING POINTS

- Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers.
- More than one million cases of basal cell or squamous cell cancers occur annually. Most, but not all, of these forms of skin cancer are highly curable.
- The most serious form of skin cancer is melanoma. Melanoma can spread to other parts of the body quickly. However, when detected in its earliest stages and treated properly, it is highly curable.
- Nearly all skin cancers can be prevented by limiting unprotected exposure to the sun and can be cured if detected early.
- Tanning beds are just as dangerous as tanning outdoors.
- To prevent skin cancer, the American Cancer Society recommends the following ways to protect your skin:
  - Follow the *Slip! Slop! Slap!*® guidelines for protecting yourself while outdoors. *Slip!* on a shirt, *Slop!* on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, and *Slap!* on a hat. Also wrap on sunglasses to protect your eyes from harmful UV rays.
  - Limit or avoid exposure to UV rays during the midday hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).
  - Avoid artificial sources of UV light (sun lamps and tanning beds).
- Check your own skin, preferably once a month. Be familiar with your pattern of moles, blemishes, freckles, and other marks on your skin so you'll notice any changes.
- Have a doctor look at any moles or spots on the skin that are changing in size, shape, or color. Any unusual sore, lump, blemish, marking, or change in the way the skin looks or feels may be a sign of skin cancer.

BULLETIN BOX

Limiting unprotected exposure to the sun can prevent nearly all skin cancers. When they do occur, most skin cancers – even melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer – can be treated successfully if detected early.

For more information, call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

RESOURCES

American Cancer Society Web site: www.cancer.org
American Cancer Society phone number: 1-800-ACS-2345
National Cancer Institute Web site: www.cancer.gov
National Cancer Institute phone number: 1-800-4CANCER

Join us for an informative discussion on reducing the risk of skin cancer.

Location:

Date: Time:

For more information, contact:

Join Us for an Informative Discussion on Reducing the Risk of Skin Cancer

Learn about:
Benefits of early detection
How skin cancer can be prevented
What warning signs to look for

Location:

Date:

Time:

For more information, contact:

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SAMPLE NEWSLETTER:

MONITOR YOUR SKIN FOR SIGNS OF SKIN CANCER

In order to detect skin cancer in its earliest stages, it's important to check your own skin, preferably once a month. Be familiar with your pattern of moles, blemishes, freckles, and other marks on your skin so that you'll notice any changes.

Have a doctor look at any moles or spots on the skin that are changing in size, shape, or color. Any unusual sore, lump, blemish, marking, or change in the way the skin looks or feels may be a sign of skin cancer.

Know the difference in appearance between melanoma and an ordinary mole. Most people have moles, and most moles are harmless. But it is important to recognize changes in a mole that can suggest a melanoma may be developing.

The A-B-C-D rule can help distinguish a normal mole from melanoma. The following are signs of a possible melanoma:

- Asymmetry: One-half of the mole does not match the other half.
- Border irregularity: The edges of the mole are ragged or notched.
- Color: The color of the mole is not the same. There may be differing shades of tan, brown, or black, and sometimes patches of red, blue, or white.
- Diameter: The mole is wider than six millimeters (about 1/4 inch). Any sudden or continuing increase in size should be of special concern.

For more information on skin cancer, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit their Web site at www.cancer.org.

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SAMPLE NEWSLETTER:

ENJOY YOUR SUMMER WITH SAFETY

Summer is just around the corner – and that means longer days and more time in the sun. You'll probably be doing a lot more outdoor activities. But as you enjoy this time of year, don't forget to protect yourself and your family from the sun's harmful effects.

Blending a few basic sun safety habits into your daily routine can save your skin not only from short-term damage like sunburn and tanning, but also long-term damage like wrinkles and cancer. Take just a few simple steps, and you can look forward to a healthy, happy summer.

Before you head outside for the day, protect your skin from the harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun with *Slip! Slop! Slap!*®

- Slip on a shirt made of tightly woven material that you can't see through when held up to the light.
- Slop on sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Be sure to reapply after swimming, sweating, or toweling off.
- Slap on a hat with a wide brim to protect your face, neck, and ears; add sunglasses to protect your eyes and the surrounding skin. (If you choose a baseball cap, don't forget to put sunscreen on your exposed skin.)

Watch the clock also. During the middle of the day, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., the sun's rays are the strongest. Try to plan activities in the shade or indoors during those hours.

Protect your skin every day, now and year-round. For more tips on sun safety and to find out how to detect skin cancer early, when it's most treatable, contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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SAMPLE NEWSLETTER:

TEACHING KIDS SUN BASICS CAN PREVENT SKIN CANCER IN THE FUTURE

Summer means more exposure to the sun. The American Cancer Society reminds parents to teach children the sun basics – Slip! on a shirt, Slop! on sunscreen with an sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher, and Slap! on a hat for fun in the sun.

Take care of your kids inside and out

Making sure your children eat right and get enough sleep takes care of their inside, but their outside needs special care, too. It's important to protect their skin from the damaging effects of the sun. No matter what they're doing or what time of year it is, if they're outside, they need to be protected.

Play in the shade

The sun's rays are generally strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Whenever possible, plan outdoor activities so you're not in the sun during the middle of the day. When your children are outdoors, be sure their skin is protected. UV rays reflect off water, sand, snow, and any light-colored surface, like concrete. UV rays also reach below water's surface.

Cover up with hats and shirts

Have fun choosing hats and shirts with your children. Hats should shade their faces, necks, and ears. When it comes to clothes, choose shirts and slacks made of tightly woven fabrics that you can't see through when held up to the light. Dark colors provide more protection than light, since they prevent more UV rays from reaching the skin.

Use sunscreen every day

Apply sunscreen every day on skin that is not protected by clothing or a hat. Choose a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. For total sun block and a really cool look, try zinc oxide. It can be applied to sensitive areas such as the nose, ears, cheeks, and shoulders. Parents should note that sunscreen is not recommended for children less than six months old. Keep them covered and in the shade.

Avoid tanning booths

No matter how much your teenager may beg, a sunlamp or tanning booth is not a good idea. They are as harmful to skin as the sun. It's a common misconception that a tan from one of these artificial methods can protect a person in the sun when they go on a vacation.

For more information about skin cancer prevention, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit their Web site at www.cancer.org.

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FACT SHEET

- Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers.

- Research shows a link between sunburns in children and an increased risk of melanoma and skin cancer later in life.

- Protecting skin from the sun during childhood and adolescence is very important in reducing the risk of skin cancer in adulthood.

- Protecting your skin from the sun's rays can prevent nearly all skin cancers.

- The American Cancer Society recommends:
  - Wearing protective clothing when out in the sun;
  - Wearing a hat that shades your face, neck, and ears;
  - Wearing a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher;
  - Planning outdoor activities to avoid the midday sun;
  - Wearing sunglasses to protect eyes and the tender skin around them from harmful UV rays; and
  - Avoiding tanning booths.

- The A-B-C-D rule can help distinguish a normal mole from melanoma (the most serious type of skin cancer):
  - Asymmetry: One-half of the mole does not match the other half.
  - Border irregularity: The edges of the mole are ragged or notched.
  - Color: The color of the mole is not the same. There may be differing shades of tan, brown, or black, and sometimes patches of red, blue, or white.
  - Diameter: The mole is wider than six millimeters (approximately one-fourth inch or the width of a pencil eraser). Any sudden or continuing increase in size should be of special concern.

- Everyone is at risk for skin cancer, whatever the skin color.

- Tanning beds are just as dangerous to your skin as tanning outdoors.
  - Tanning beds release dangerously high levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which can cause premature aging of the skin and increase risk for skin cancer.
  - Short-term indoor tanning can cause red, itchy, and dry skin.
  - Long-term indoor tanning can cause sagging, wrinkled skin.
  - Tanning beds can also burn your skin and eyes, as well as damage your immune system.

- Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit their Web site at www.cancer.org for questions to ask your doctor.

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SUN BASICS KIDS' SKIN CANCER QUIZ

Can you answer the questions below? (Answers at the bottom of the page.)

1. Why is a tiger a cool cat?

2. When is it OK to be red like a lobster?

3. What can you do so your skin won't change color like a chameleon?

Sun Basics

When you're out in the sun, take care of your skin. Without protection, the sun can give you painful sunburns or blisters. It can also make you look old and wrinkly way before your time.

You can start taking care of your skin now. We call it Sun Basics. It's fun and it's as simple as Slip! Slop! Slap! to be safe and have fun in the sun every day!

- ☼ Slip! on a shirt,
- ☼ Slop! on sunscreen with SPF of 15 or higher, and
- ☼ Slap! on a hat.

Answers

1. Why is a tiger a cool cat?
   A tiger will hang out in the shade during the middle of the day, when the sun is the hottest. You should protect yourself, too, by finding cool, shady places to play in the middle of the day.

2. When is it OK to be red like a lobster?
   Never. Always Slip! Slop! Slap! when you go outdoors.

3. What can you do so your skin won't change color like a chameleon?
   Slip! Slop! Slap! to protect your skin from the sun.

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SKIN CANCER RISK QUIZ

Score yourself to see what your risk is!

_____ **Hair color:**
Blond/Red = 4 Brown = 3 Black = 1

_____ **Eye color:**
Blue/Green = 4 Hazel = 3 Brown = 2

_____ **When exposed to one hour of summer sun, you**
Burn and sometime blister = 4
Burn then tan = 3
Tan = 1

_____ **Do you have freckles?**
Many = 5 Some = 3 None = 1

_____ **Where do you spend most of your time?**
Outdoors = 4 Mixed = 3 Indoors = 2

_____ **Has anyone in your family had skin cancer?**
Yes = 5 No = 1

_____ **Where in the U.S. did you live most before the age of 15?**
South = 4 Midwest = 3 North = 2

_____ **Total**

Score:
10 – 15 Below Average
16 – 22 Average Risk
23 – 25 High Risk
26 – 30 Very High Risk

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Is Your Skin Protected?

The vast majority of skin cancers are due to unprotected and excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. Most of this exposure comes from sunlight. Take the following quiz to find out if you are protecting your skin from the harmful effects of the sun.

1. What clothes best protect your skin from the sun?
    a. Bathing suits
    b. A shirt made of mesh material
    c. A long-sleeved shirt made of tightly woven fabric
    d. None of the above

2. You should use *sunscreen* with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least:
    a. 4
    b. 5
    c. 10
    d. 15

3. When should you reapply sunscreen?
    a. After perspiring
    b. After toweling dry
    c. After swimming
    d. All of the above

4. The best time to avoid the sun is:
    a. Between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m.
    b. Between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
    c. All of the above
    d. None of the above

5. During what season is the sun not harmful?
    a. Winter
    b. Fall
    c. Spring
    d. None of the above

Answers:
1. C
2. D
3. D
4. B
5. D

Being safe in the sun doesn't mean you have to stay indoors. There are many ways to protect your skin and still enjoy your time outside. For tips call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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SUGGESTED MATERIAL

Title: Sun Basics
Description: Skin protection information targeted to kids ages eight to 12.
Order #: 2012.00
Cost: $0.06
Quantity: Banded in 25

Title: A Parent's Guide to Skin Protection
Description: Tips for parents on protecting children from the sun.
Order#: 2012.04
Cost: $0.07
Quantity: Banded in 25

Title: Why You Should Know About Melanoma
Description: An overview of melanoma, including warning signs, treatment, and prevention.
Order #: 2619.00
Cost: $0.17
Quantity: Banded in 25

Title: Go Natural
Description: Information on the dangers of tanning salons.
Order #: 2403.17
Cost: $0.08
Quantity: Banded in 25

To order, call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

Other References:
American Cancer Society's Web site, www.cancer.org
National Cancer Institute Web site: www.cancer.gov
National Cancer Institute phone number: 1-800-4CANCER

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SPEAKER'S NOTES FOR PRESENTATION

Slide 1: Welcome to this presentation on Reducing the Risk of Skin Cancer. My name is _____. I appreciate the opportunity to share this information with you and hope that you will find it useful.

Slide 2: none

Slide 3: Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas seldom become life threatening if they are recognized and treated. Nonmelanoma skin cancer (basal and squamous) is a preventable disease.

Slide 4: none

Slide 5: Limiting unprotected exposure to the sun will reduce the incidence of skin cancer and melanoma. Adopting healthy behaviors early in life is especially important.

Although people with darker skin seldom become sunburned, no one is immune to the damaging effects of the sun. As with most cancers, the chance of developing skin cancer and melanoma increases as a person ages.

Research shows a link between sunburns in children and an increased risk of melanoma and skin cancer later in life. Protecting skin from the sun during childhood and adolescence is important in reducing cancer risk later in life.

Slide 6: Most of us have spots on our skin. It is important to check your skin on a monthly basis and "get to know your spots!" In doing this, you will be able to recognize changes if they occur.

Slide 7: These simple A-B-C-D rules help you to remember the important signs of melanoma and other skin cancers. Other warning signs of melanoma include:

- Spread of pigment from the border into surrounding skin;
- Redness or a new swelling beyond the border;
- Changes in sensation (itchiness, tenderness, or pain); and
- Changes on the surface (scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or the appearance of a bump or nodule).

Helpful hint: One-fourth inch is the approximate size of a pencil eraser. This helps put mole size or skin irregularities in perspective when compared to a pencil eraser.

Slide 8: The type of skin cancer, location, what stage the cancer is found (how advanced is the cancer or has it spread) will all determine the type of treatment chosen.

- Surgery typically involves the actual removal or excision of the cancer.
- Cryosurgery utilizes a freezing agent (often liquid nitrogen) to destroy the cancer.
- Lasers offer the advantage of a relatively bloodless surgical field and reduced postoperative pain.
- Chemotherapy is appropriate for locally aggressive or metastatic tumors.

We've just briefly talked about skin cancer treatment in the event that skin cancer occurs; however, our goal is to prevent it from ever occurring.

Slide 9: none

Slide 10: none

Slide 11: none

Slide 12: Sunscreen is not recommended for children less than six months old. Protect them with clothing and keep them in the shade.

Slide 13: Don't forget your eyes. Sunglasses help protect them from harsh UV rays, a contributing factor to cataracts.

Also, don't forget your lips. Lip balms with SPFs are available. The sun's UV rays are reflected off of water, sand, and snow – you need protection even in the winter.

Slide 14: none

Slide 15: none

Slide 16: none