What we’ll be talking about

- How common is skin cancer?
- What is skin cancer?
- The 2 main types of skin cancer
- Causes of skin cancer
- What are the risk factors?
- Can skin cancer be prevented?
- What you can do
- More information
Skin cancer: How common is it?

- Skin cancer – including melanoma and basal and squamous cell skin cancers – is the most common of all types of cancer.

- It accounts for at least half of all cancers.
What is skin cancer?

- The skin is the largest organ in the body.
- The skin is made up of 3 layers and many different cells.
- Skin cancers are named for the type of cells that become cancer.
2 main types of skin cancer

- Cancers that develop from melanocytes, the pigment-making cells of the skin, are called melanomas.
- Skin cancers that are not melanoma are sometimes called non-melanoma skin cancers because they tend to act very differently from melanomas. The 2 most common kinds are:
  - Basal cell carcinoma
  - Squamous cell carcinoma
Melanoma

- Melanomas are usually brown or black, but they can be blue, red, or a combination of colors. They can also have no color.
- Melanomas can grow anywhere on the skin, but are more likely to start in certain locations.
  - Trunk (men)
  - Legs (women)
  - Neck
  - Face
Melanoma

- Is much less common than basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers, but it’s far more dangerous.

- Is almost always curable in its early stages – when it’s small and has not spread.
Basal and squamous cell skin cancers

- About 8 out of 10 skin cancers are basal cell carcinomas.
- Squamous cell carcinomas account for about 2 out of 10 skin cancers.
- They usually develop on sun-exposed areas of the body.
- They are less serious than melanoma.
Causes of skin cancer

- Most skin cancers are caused by ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure to the area of skin that develops the cancer.
- The UV radiation changes the genetic material (DNA) in our cells.
Skin cancer risk factors

Risk factors are anything that can increase or decrease a person’s chance of getting a disease, such as cancer.

There are many known risk factors for the more common forms of skin cancer. Some of these cannot be changed, but some can.
Skin cancer risk factors

- Ultraviolet (UV) light exposure
  - This is the main risk factor for developing most skin cancers

- Fair skin, freckling, and light hair
  - The risk of skin cancer is much higher for light-skinned people than for those with darker skin
Melanoma risk factors

- Moles
  - Most moles will never cause any problems, but a person who has many moles is more likely to develop melanoma.

- Family history of melanoma
  - Melanoma risk is greater if 1 or more of your first-degree relatives (mother, father, brother, sister, child) has been diagnosed with melanoma.
Melanoma risk factors

- Personal history of melanoma
  - A person who has already had melanoma has an increased risk of getting it again.

- Immune suppression
  - People who have been treated with medicines that suppress the immune system, such as organ transplant patients, have a higher risk of developing melanoma.

- Gender
  - Before age 40, the risk is higher for women; after age 40 the risk is higher in men.
Basal and squamous cell cancer risk factors

- **Age** → risk goes up as people get older

- **Gender**
  - Men are about 2 times as likely as women to have basal cell cancers
  - Men are about 3 times as likely as women to have squamous cell cancers of the skin.

- Treatment with radiation → increases risk in area that was treated
Basal and squamous cell cancer risk factors

- Exposure to certain chemicals
  - Large amounts of arsenic
  - Work exposure to industrial tar, coal, paraffin, and certain types of oil

- Previous skin cancer

- Smoking \( \rightarrow \) increases risk of squamous cell cancer, especially on the lips
So what can you do to prevent and beat skin cancer?
Preventing skin cancer

There’s no sure way to prevent skin cancer.

But there are things everyone can do to help reduce their risk of both melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers.
Preventing skin cancer

- Limit ultraviolet (UV) exposure
  - Sun safety
  - “Slip! Slop! Slap!® ... and Wrap”

- Protect your skin with clothing
  - Be aware that covering up doesn’t block out all UV rays.
  - Some sun-protective clothes have a label listing the ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) value.
Preventing skin cancer

- Wear a hat

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that’s at least SPF 30
  - Put it on about 20 to 30 minutes before you go outside.
  - Reapply at least every 2 hours
Preventing skin cancer

- Do not use sunscreen to stay out in the sun longer
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses that block UVA and UVB light and have at least 99% UV absorption
- Stay in the shade
- Avoid other sources of UV light (tanning beds, tanning lamps, and sun lamps)
Preventing skin cancer

- Protect children from the sun
  - Kids tend to spend more time outside and burn more easily
  - Make sun safety a habit for your kids!

- Identify abnormal moles and have them removed
  - Some moles → increased risk of developing into a melanoma
Finding skin cancer early

Skin cancer can often be found early—when it’s small and easier to treat.

- Get your skin checked by a health care professional
  - This should be part of a routine cancer-related check-up
  - Your doctor should be willing to discuss any concerns you might have about this exam.
Finding skin cancer early

- Know your skin
  - Check your own skin, preferably on a regular basis
  - Learn the pattern of moles, blemishes, freckles, and other marks so that you’ll notice any changes.
  - Self-exam is best done in a well-lit room in front of a full-length mirror. A hand-held mirror can be used for areas that are hard to see.
  - Examine all areas, including your palms and soles, scalp, ears, nails, and your back.
Finding skin cancer early

- What you should look for
  - A new growth
  - A spot, bump, or mole that has slowly gotten larger (over a few months or 1 to 2 years)
  - A spot or mole that’s changing in shape, feel, or color
  - A sore that doesn’t heal within 3 months

If you have a spot that worries you, see a doctor as soon as you can.
Finding melanoma early

The *ABCD rule* can help tell a normal mole from an abnormal mole or a melanoma. Moles that have any of these traits should be checked by a doctor:

- **Asymmetry**: half the mole does not match the other half
- **Border irregularity**: edges of the mole are irregular, ragged, blurred, or notched
- **Color**: mole is not the same color all over. Differing shades of tan, brown, or black may be present, and sometimes patches of pink, red, blue, or white
- **Diameter**: larger than 6 millimeters or about ⅛ inch, but melanomas can be smaller than this
Melanoma

A normal mole →

melanoma
Be sure to show your doctor any area of your skin that concerns you.
More information

- You can get more information on skin cancer on our website, cancer.org/skin
- Call 1-800-227-2345 and speak to one of our cancer information specialists
Thank you!
We **save lives** and create more birthdays by helping you stay well, helping you get well, by finding cures, and by fighting back.

cancer.org  |  1.800.227.2345