



FROM  
YOUR DOCTOR

# How to prevent skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers—and the number of cases is increasing. Melanomas, the most serious kind, cause about 7,000 deaths each year. Removal, the usual treatment for skin cancer, may also leave scars.

But skin cancer can often be found by doctors and patients by carefully examining the skin. If diseased moles are found and removed in time, most patients can be cured.

The best way, however, to deal with skin cancer is to prevent it. You can avoid it or slow its progress if you follow these practical suggestions:

- Avoid too much exposure to the sun. Ultraviolet rays in sunlight cause most skin cancers. If you're outdoors a lot, cover up by wearing a hat, long-sleeved shirt or blouse, and pants or skirt. Avoid being outdoors during the hours of intense sunlight: 10 AM-2 PM (11 AM-3 PM daylight saving time).
- Use sunscreen. Buy a product with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more, and consider one that protects against both kinds of ultraviolet light—A rays and B rays. Apply it generously 15-30 minutes before going out in the sun. Reapply it after two hours—and after swimming. Also use a lip salve that contains a sunscreen.
- Know the Ultraviolet Index (UI), which is usually given in the weather report. This tells how intense the sun will be. On the index, 0-4 means low risk; 5-6, some risk; 7-8, high risk; and 9-10, very high risk.
- Protect your children from the sun. People get most of their lifetime dose of sun exposure before age 18. Cover children with adequate clothing and use sunscreen lotion, just as you do for yourself.
- Avoid tanning salons. Artificial light is no safer than sunlight. You may be tempted to stay under tanning lamps too long, and employees often fail to control the amount of light customers receive.
- Eyes need protection from ultraviolet light, too. Buy sunglasses that are labeled for sun safety. If you do go to a tanning salon, be sure to wear eye protectors.
- Ask your doctor if any of your medications make you more sensitive to light. You may have to change the way you take them or cut down on your outdoor activities.

**patient  
care**

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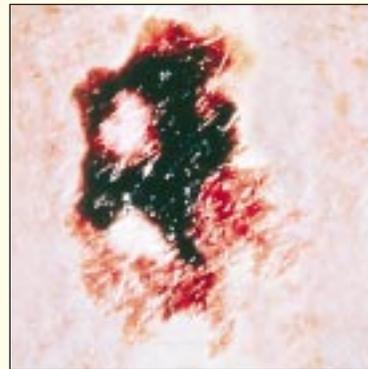
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- Examine your skin regularly. Look for skin that is becoming thick, leathery, and wrinkled. This is a sign that the sun is causing damage. If you find damaged skin, be extra careful to avoid more sun exposure.
- Let your doctor know if you find anything on your skin that's unusual or changing. The earlier skin cancer is detected, the better your chances of a full recovery. For examples of what to look for, see the pictures below. ▼



**A normal mole** is a uniform shape and relatively small.



**Malignant melanoma** is asymmetrical and enlarged.



**An irregular border** is another sign of melanoma.



**Uneven coloring** is also a warning sign of melanoma.