

# SKIN CANCER

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer and also one of the most preventable cancer.

## FACTS ABOUT SKIN CANCER

- Skin Cancer is the second most common cancer in young adults aged 15 - 34.
- Canadians born in the 1990s have 2-3 times higher lifetime risk of getting skin cancer (1 in 6) than those born in the 1960s (1 in 20).
- There are more new cases of skin cancer each year than the number of breast, prostate, lung and colon cancers COMBINED!

## TYPES OF SKIN CANCER

- **Actinic keratosis (AK)**: is a skin condition caused by exposure to ultraviolet radiation (i.e. sunlight).
- **Basal cell Carcinoma (BCC)**: It starts in the basal cells at the bottom of the epidermis (outer skin layer) and is caused by long-term exposure to sunlight. It is the most easily treated.
- **Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)**: It starts in the epidermis, eventually penetrating the underlying tissue if not treated. It is easily treated when found early, but in a small percentage of cases, this cancer spreads (metastasizes) to other parts of the body.
- **Malignant melanoma** is the most serious type of skin cancer and is responsible for the most deaths. However, it can be cured if it is diagnosed and removed early. Melanoma can develop from a pre-existing mole that appeared normal but changes, or as an irregular appearing new spot.

*\* Melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer and number one killer of women aged 25 - 30. Over 80,000 cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in Canada each year, more than 5,000 of which are melanoma.*

## CAUSE FOR SKIN CANCER

- One in every three cancers diagnosed worldwide is a skin cancer, 80-90% of which are caused by overexposure of the skin to ultraviolet (UV) radiation.
- The most common sources of UV radiation on the skin are the sun and artificial tanning beds.

## RISK FACTORS

- **Ultraviolet radiation**  
Exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) is the most important risk factor for developing all types of skin cancer.
- **Sun exposure now and then**  
People who are exposed to strong sunlight now and then, like holidaying in a hot country, are more at risk of melanoma than people who are continuously exposed to sunlight, like people who work outdoors
- **Number of moles**  
A mole is a non-cancerous mark or area of abnormal tissue on the skin. Most moles are harmless. But if you have many moles you have a higher risk of developing melanoma
- **Fair complexion**  
People with a fair complexion have a higher risk of developing melanoma than people with other skin types.

### **Personal history of skin cancer**

People who have already had melanoma have a higher risk of developing another primary melanoma.

- **Family history of skin cancer**  
Your risk of developing melanoma increases if one or more of your first-degree relatives has been diagnosed with melanoma.
- **Tall adult height**  
Research has shown that people who are tall may have a slightly higher risk of melanoma

## Early Detection

Examining your skin on a regular basis could lead to early detection, treatment and in most cases, positive outcomes.

The Canadian Skin Cancer Foundation recommends self examinations at least monthly, using the **ABCDEs of early detection** to help determine if a doctor should be consulted. At the same time, it is also important to check your whole body, including asking someone to help check your back and scalp. Skin cancer can show up on parts of the body that are not always exposed to the sun, so make sure you check places like your armpits or the bottoms of your feet.

### **ABCDEs of Early Detection**

**A - Asymetry B- Border C-colour D - Diameter E- Evolution**

For more detail: <http://www.canadianskincancerfoundation.com/early-detection.html>

## PREVENTION

### Skin cancer is preventable!

- Practicing **sun safety** and avoiding the **use of tanning beds** could prevent skin cancer in yourself and in your children.

## SUN SAFETY

- Stay out of the sun between **10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** or any time the **UV Index\* is 3 or higher**
- Cover arms and legs with loose-fitting, tightly woven and lightweight clothing
- Wear a wide-brim hat to protect head, face, neck and ears
- Stay in the shade - under trees, awnings or umbrellas and away from reflected UV rays
- **Wear sunglasses:**
  - with UV protection of 400
  - block 99% of UVA and UVB
  - wrap around your eyes to protect the sides of your eyes

### If you have to be out in the sun:

- use sunscreen\*\* with an SPF of 30 or higher
- apply at least 20 minutes before going into the sun
- reapply every 2 or 3 hours
- reapply after swimming or perspiring
- apply generously to ensure the creation of a barrier between the sun's rays & skin
- alternate application of sun screen with application of bug sprays
- be sure to reach under the edges of your clothing, the back of your neck, your ears and other places that are often missed or forgotten

*Note: It is difficult to study how sunscreen affects the risk of melanoma. This is because people who use sunscreen may stay longer in the sun because they think they are protected. So they actually get more exposure to ultraviolet light overall. So need more understanding about sunscreen.*

### Protecting children from skin cancer

Babies and young children have delicate skin. All children, no matter whether they tan easily or not, should be protected from the sun. Children with fair or red hair, pale eyes or freckles are at most risk. Keep babies under 6 months out of direct sunlight, especially around midday.

**\* These precautions are important all year round when the sun's rays bounce off the snow, sand, water and even concrete!**

- **Canadian Cancer Society** :<http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/skin-melanoma/statistics/?region=on#ixzz3gS7iabrL>
- **Canadian Skin Cancer Foundation** :<http://www.canadianskincancerfoundation.com/spotitstopit.html>