

Statistics and Facts on Skin Cancer

All statistics and numbers in the curriculum are taken from the American Cancer Society (ACS), American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER), the Society for Investigative Dermatology and the Skin Cancer Foundation websites, unless otherwise noted.

Why is it important to get the message out about the dangers of skin cancer? More importantly, why should it matter to teenagers??? Childhood and adolescence are the *critical* times for sun protection. Early sun exposure and blistering sunburns under the age of 20 have been shown to increase the incidence of skin cancer. The skin cancers that affect adults are partially a result of the sun damage they received in childhood and adolescence, not to mention the wrinkling and aging! Regular sun protection throughout childhood can reduce the risk of skin cancer by 78%.

Many people believe that a tan is healthy and that it protects you from sun damage. In truth, a tan is a sign of skin damage which is directly linked to the development of skin cancers. A tan is your skin’s defensive mechanism to prevent the absorption of ultraviolet radiation but this is limited based on skin phenotype. Persons with lighter skin, hair and eye color (lower phenotypes) have a lesser ability to natively protect their skin.

| Year | Proportion of People Who Developed Melanoma |
|------|---|
| 1935 | One out of every 1500 |
| 1960 | One out of every 800 |
| 1980 | One out of every 250 |
| 2002 | One out of every 67 |
| 2010 | One out of every 50 (predicted) |

Statistics and Facts

- More than a million people will be diagnosed with skin cancer this year.
- One in five Americans will get skin cancer in the course of a lifetime.
- One of every two new cancers will be a skin cancer.
- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the US.
- One person in America dies from melanoma every 65 minutes.
- Between 1985-2005, there was a 103% increase in the number of pediatric melanomas (less than 18 years old). This does not include the increase in the number of basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas. As with adults, factors found to contribute to the

development of melanoma in persons less than 20 years include increased UV exposure and fair skin.

- In the US, melanoma (the most deadly form of skin cancer) is the second most common cancer diagnosed in women aged 20-29.5 years.
- Melanoma is the most rapidly increasing cancer among young people today. If caught early, it is almost always treatable. If ignored until it is metastatic, it is almost always fatal.
- More than 90% of all skin cancers are caused by sun exposure, yet fewer than 33% of adults, adolescents, and children routinely use sun protection.
- One blistering sunburn in childhood more than doubles a person's chances of developing melanoma later in life.
- While melanoma is uncommon in African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians, it usually presents at a later stage, and therefore can be more deadly for these populations.
- Both basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma have a better than 95 percent five-year cure rate if detected and treated early.¹
- There are more cases of skin cancer than breast, colon, lung, prostate, and all other cancers combined.
- Are tanning beds safe? No. Tanning beds are *at least* as dangerous as radiation from the sun. Tanning device users had 2.5 times the risk of squamous cell carcinoma and 1.5 times the risk of basal cell carcinoma compared to non-users in a 2002 study by Karagas.² Reports suggest that tanning beds may be worse for you than sun exposure. UVB radiation is the "sunburn-causing" spectrum of light. UVA radiation is the "cancer-causing" spectrum of light. While the UVB exposure levels in tanning beds are similar to natural sunlight, the UVA ("cancer-causing") levels are 10 to 15 times higher.³
- In 2004, the total direct cost associated with the treatment for non-melanoma skin cancer was \$1.5 billion. Of that, \$1.2 billion is attributed to care received in physician offices.⁴
- From 1950 to 2001, melanoma incidence increased 690%.⁴
- SEER data analysis for women born after 1965, shows a recent (1990's onward) increase in cutaneous melanoma incidence (for both thinner and thicker lesions) specifically among young Caucasian women in the U.S.⁵ Concomitantly, the use of tanning beds has increased and is prevalent among young women in the U.S.^{6,7}
- SEER data shows a decline in mortality rates for both Caucasian men and women from 1981 onward that is consistent with earlier detection through increased disease surveillance.⁵