

Glossary

actinic keratosis

- overgrowth of skin layers caused from ultraviolet radiation (UVR), may turn into a skin cancer (precursor lesion), also known as “pre-cancer,” often scaly, rough to touch

basal cell carcinoma

- most common skin cancer; found frequently on the head/neck; appear as small waxy, pearly or red bumps that may be bleeding, scabbed and have a rolled edge; rarely metastasizes (overall metastatic rate <0.1%), but can cause extensive tissue damage

biopsy

- sample of tissue

benign

- no danger to health, harmless

Breslow’s Thickness

- microscopic measurement (in micrometers) of melanoma thickness from top (epidermal granular layer) to bottom of tumor used to predict prognosis

cancer

- malignant tumor caused by uncontrolled cell growth

chemotherapy

- drugs used to treat cancer

Clark’s Level

- depth of penetration of melanoma tumor based on what skin layer (epidermis, papillary dermis, reticular dermis, subcutaneous tissue) tumor reaches

cryotherapy

- treatment of medical problem by freezing, usually with liquid nitrogen

dermatologist

- a doctor who treats skin problems

dermis

- the bottom layer of the skin

dihydroxyacetone (DHA)

- the main ingredient that darkens the skin in most self-tanning products

epidermis

- the outermost layer of the skin

freckle

- brownish spots on skin which turn darker and/or increase in number from ultraviolet radiation

heredity

- characteristics that are genetically passed down from your family members

in situ

- earliest form of cancer, in skin - limited to epidermis, Stage 0

immunotherapy

- treatment of disease by altering an immune response

lesion

- a changed spot in the skin

gene mutations

- part of DNA that is changed

malignant

- dangerous to health, harmful

melanin

- dark pigment/color in skin

melanocyte

- pigment/color producing cell of the epidermis

melanoma

- skin cancer of pigment/color producing cells, 4-6% of skin cancers, highest metastatic rate

metastases

- cancer cells that spread to other parts of the body, away from original place of the cancer

Mohs' micrographic surgery

- tissue-sparing method for removing skin cancer; the skin cancer is generally mapped into quadrants, a layer is cut out, examined under a microscope for cancer cells, next layer removed only excises cancerous portions; provides a very high cure rate

mole

- pigmented or non-pigmented spot on skin composed of melanocytes, some present since birth, may increase in number and size with UVR exposure, large numbers of moles run in families

nevi

- same as mole

phototherapy

- treatment of medical problem with light

risk factor

- something that increases your chances of getting a disease or illness

skin types

- I – fair white skin, always burns, never tans
- II – medium white skin, always burns, tans minimally
- III – medium white to olive skin, burns moderately, tans gradually
- IV – olive skin, minimal burning, tans well
- V – brown skin, rarely burns, tans darkly
- VI – dark brown, never burns, tans very darkly

squamous cell

- 2nd most common skin cancer; frequently found on the face/neck, hands/arms; may appear as red, rough spots that may bleed; can metastasize to body (overall metastatic rate is <3%, but percentage increases with site and subtype)

stratum corneum

- the outer layer of the epidermis which contains the cells that slough off

SPF

- Sun Protection Factor or SPF is a number on the outside of the sunscreen bottle that describes the percentage of protection provided from UVB radiation only.

tanning bed

- a structure lined with light bulbs in which one stands or lays in order to darken the skin

tumor (malignant)

- mass of uncontrolled growth of cancerous cells

ultraviolet radiation

- radiation below the wavelength of 400 nanometers; may be found naturally as in outdoor sunlight or artificially as in indoor tanning beds

UVA

- (320-400 nm): long wavelength; reaches biosphere, little affected by ozone. Causes deep tissue damage; found to be responsible for skin cancer, wrinkling, sagging, and age spots. Penetrates glass, water (clouds) and the dermis. These are the rays used in tanning bed bulbs.

UVB

- (280-320 nm): shorter wavelength; reaches biosphere; partially blocked by the stratosphere and glass; causes skin cancer, cataracts, macular degeneration. Considered the “burning” rays.

UVC

- (100-280 nm): very short wavelength, little reaches biosphere due to absorption and scattering by atmospheric oxygen, nitrogen and ozone; can be dangerous but little reaches humans