

# SKIN CANCER: An undeclared epidemic

 We spend much more time outdoors than our grandparents and great-grandparents ever did, particularly here in Florida, and we wear less clothes when we do it. It's hardly a coincidence, then, that skin cancer—which is caused primarily by rays of the sun—is the most common type of cancer in the United States today.

Of those Americans who live to age 65, 40 to 50 percent are expected to have skin cancer at least once. Fair-skinned persons or those who suffered a bad sunburn as children are among those particularly at risk. Since the 1940s, the per-lifetime incidence rate of melanoma, the most serious and deadly skin cancer, has increased from about one in 1,500 to one in 105.

Fortunately, skin cancer also happens to be among the most treatable of all cancers.

"Skin cancer is entirely curable," says James M. Spencer, M.D., M.S., director of the MOHS micrograph-

ic surgery for skin cancer at the University of Miami. "It's the one cancer we can see in its very early stages and it has virtually a 100 percent cure rate when caught early.

"No one should ever die of skin cancer."

To protect yourself, the Skin Cancer Foundation urges you to examine your skin once every three months. Don't ignore a suspicious spot just because it doesn't hurt. See your doctor if you notice any of these warning signs:

- ☐ A skin growth that increases in size and appears pearly, translucent, tan, brown, black or multi-colored.
- ☐ A mole, birthmark, beauty mark or any brown spot that changes color, increases in size or thickness, changes in texture, is irregular in outline, is bigger than the end of a pencil eraser, or appears after age 21.
- ☐ A spot or sore that continues to itch, hurt, crust, scab, erode or bleed.
- ☐ An open sore that does not heal within three weeks.



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