

**Skin Cancer**

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## **Skin Cancer**

Most people are unaware that skin cancer is the most prominent form of cancer in the United States. Millions of Americans are diagnosed every year with skin cancer. Current estimates are that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Nonmelanoma skin cancer, including basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma, affects more than 3 million Americans a year (American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2022). Being aware of what signs and symptoms to look for could help in early detection and treatment. There are different types of skin cancer to look out for - the three most common types are basal cell, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma. Melanoma, also called malignant melanoma, is the most serious form of skin cancer. A person is at risk of skin cancer if they have a genetic disposition or from extended sun exposure. Light skin color, blue eyes, and blonde hair could also be a risk for skin cancer. Before the age of 50, evidence shows that rates are higher in women compared to men. After the age of 50, men tend to have higher rates. White populations have higher rates compared other races (American Academy of Dermatology Association, 2022). There are many ways for a person to protect themselves from this serious but preventable condition. This paper will discuss evidence-based information regarding the different types of skin cancer, signs and symptoms, treatment options, and preventative measures that can be taken.

### **Statement of the Problem**

What is skin cancer? Skin cancer occurs when normal skin cells change into abnormal cells and grow out of control. Skin cancer is rated on a scale of 0-4, with 4 being the most serious and deadly. The level of skin cancer is determined on the depth of the primary sites and if it has spread to other areas of the body like the tissues, organs, lymph nodes, or other skin areas. In stage 0, cancer cells are found on the outer layer of the skin. In stage 1, the cancer cells are

found on the epidermis or the first part of the inner layer of skin. In stage 2, the lesion has spread to the deepest part of the dermis and stage 3 is when the cancer spreads to one or three of the nearby lymph nodes or skin tissue. In the last and most severe stage, stage 4, the cancer has spread through the bloodstream to the tissues, organs, and skin areas. Melanoma often originates from a mole found on the skin around 70% of the time but could also look like a new growth. It spreads across the skin horizontally on the surface, and then vertically deep within the skin (Melanoma [Malignant],2023). Melanoma usually occurs on the lower legs in women and trunk and head in men. Melanoma can metastasize to any organ, including the heart and brain (Rudolph, T.M, 2020). Ways to remember the abnormal features of melanoma is to remember A, B, C, D and E. **A**symmetry which is when one side can look different than the other. **B**order - jagged or uneven edges around the mole. **C**olor which is when the mole will have different colors (often times, black, brown and red). **D**iameter that is larger than a pencil eraser. **E**volution is the last feature which is when the color, shape, and size of the mole will change over time. It is important to pay attention to a mole that has become painful or bleeds when itching because that could be an indicator that something is abnormal (Melanoma [malignant], 2023).

Skin cancer can often be treated if caught early. Many people ignore the signs and symptoms upon first detection which can lead to health problems down the road. Skin cancer could be prevented if people had more education about preventative measures that could be taken to protect themselves from dangerous sun exposure. Education about self-examinations, genetic mutations and how/when to seek treatment could lessen the severity of skin cancer if found early. It is important for health care providers to educate their patients on what to look for as far as skin changes in moles and how to protect themselves in the sun.

## **Risk Reduction/Treatment of the Problem**

There are many factors that increase the risk of getting skin cancers such as basal cell, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. It is important for a person to be able to identify the warning signs and symptoms if a change in skin pigmentation or texture occurs. A major way to prevent dangerous skin damage is avoiding excessive sun exposure and ultraviolet light from tanning beds. Family history of skin cancer can also increase the risk of a person being diagnosed with cancer. The risk of a person developing melanoma increases with age due to increased sun exposure over the duration of their life. The use of sunscreen and wearing hats when out in the sun can help protect a person's skin and reduce the risk of developing cancer.

A person should schedule an exam with a dermatologist for a thorough skin check if melanoma is suspected. If the dermatologist suspects that the skin mole or lesion is cancerous, a biopsy will be completed by the dermatologist. The dermatologist will remove the abnormal area and inspect the sample under a microscope to determine if the cells are cancerous. There are different kinds of biopsies that can be performed, shave biopsy- which uses a small razor or scalpel to scrape at the top layer of skin to remove the lesion. A punch biopsy, which uses punch tool to get deeper into the skin layer. Excisional biopsy is when the lesion is removed, and a skin graft or flap may be used to replace the skin if the area removed was large. Lastly, an incisional biopsy which a scalpel is used to remove a piece of the skin to be tested. (Skin biopsy,2022). When performed, it is important to teach about what will happen during the procedure to reduce any fears or anxiety a person may have. There are many different treatments that can take place depending on the stage of the cancer. Melanoma can be treated with surgery to remove the cancerous cells from a person's body. During this procedure, the doctor will also check nearby lymph nodes to make sure the cancer has not spread to other parts of the body.

According to (Melanoma skin cancer [The Basics], 2022), targeted therapy is another form of treatment that a doctor could often use for cancers with certain characteristics. This therapy utilizes medications to block specific proteins or molecules. Immune therapy is used with medications that will work on the body's infection fighting system to stop the cancer growth. There are also other therapies, such as radiation, which kills the cancer cells using high doses of ionizing radiation in the targeted area of the body or chemotherapy which uses chemical substances to help kill the cancer cells and stop them from growing. Once any of these treatments are used, follow up visits are recommended. Routine self-examinations are also important to make sure there are no new growths or changes happening on the skin (Melanoma skin cancer (The Basics), 2022).

### **Planning of Teaching Content**

Education about the signs, symptoms, and risks of skin cancer can help save lives. Teaching the importance of skin screenings and examinations, especially if something on the skin does not appear normal is a vital strategy to help prevent skin cancer. Providing education on the abnormal features of melanoma (**A**symmetry, **B**order, **C**olor, **D**iameter, **E**volution) will provide guidance to people about when to reach out to their health care provider at the earliest detection.

Although early detection is important in preventing dangerous skin cancers from developing, prevention is key. The use of sunscreens and clothing that provides protection against sun rays will prevent excessive skin damage and reduce a person's risk of developing skin conditions such as melanoma. Providing a visual poster and handouts with examples of suspicious skin lesions and moles is an effective teaching tool because it provides realistic examples of the characteristics of the different skin cancers, like basal cell carcinoma, squamous

cell carcinoma, and melanoma. As well as providing samples of sunscreen to help promote the use of sunscreen to prevent skin cancer. Community skin checks would also be a good idea if they could be performed by qualified practitioners to assist with early detection.

## **Conclusion**

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer occurring in the United States but often goes unnoticed or untreated. Early detection and prevention can help reduce the risk of nonmelanoma cancer from progressing to melanoma. Something as simple as wearing sunscreen when out in the sun, or keeping the skin covered by wearing a hat can help reduce the risk of getting skin cancer. If suspicious moles or lesions, just getting checked out by a dermatologist will also reduce the risk of the cancer spreading through out the body. During the health fair, visual posters and handouts will be provided, along with samples of sunscreen. Prevention is key.

## References

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