



## SKIN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH: FACTS AT A GLANCE

MAY, 2010

- Skin cancer is now considered the most common form of cancer in the U.S., and will affect more than one million Americans this year.
- More than 90 percent of skin cancers are caused by unnecessary exposure to the sun. Yet less than 33 percent of adults, teens and kids regularly wear sunscreen.
- Often categorized as melanoma or non-melanoma, non-melanoma skin cancer cases have risen from one million in 1987 to 3.5 million in 2009.
- Melanoma begins in the body's melanocyte cells. It is less common than non-melanoma skin cancer, accounting for five percent of all skin cancers. However, it tends to be more aggressive.
- Kansas and Missouri represent two of 10 U.S. states with the highest death rates from melanoma, according to SunWise, an environmental and health education program administered through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Self checks and tracking new or changes in existing moles is important in catching skin cancer early. Physicians recommend taking note of any mole that is not symmetric, has a changing or irregular border, has changes in color or multiple colors (red, white, and blue) or is increasing in diameter. Under any of those circumstances, individuals should consult a physician, as this could be a melanoma. Any new mole that develops after age 40 should also be examined by a physician.
- The most common type of non-melanoma skin cancer is basal cell carcinoma. This type of cancer rarely spreads to distant sites in the body, but it can be disfiguring and may invade nearby tissues.
- The second most common type of non-melanoma skin cancer is squamous cell carcinoma. Although this type of cancer is more likely to metastasize (spread to lymph nodes or other sites in the body) than basal cell carcinoma, metastasis is still rare. Both basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma most commonly develop on sun-exposed parts of the skin, but can develop on other parts of the skin as well.
- Melanoma Staging: The staging system for melanoma has recently been revised, but continues to be based on primary tumor thickness, ulceration of the primary tumor, lymph node involvement, and distant metastasis.
  - Level I: Melanomas confined to the outermost layer of the skin, the epidermis. Also called "melanoma in-situ."
  - Level II: Penetration by melanomas into the second layer of the skin, the dermis.

- Level III-IV: Melanomas invade deeper through the dermis, but are still contained completely within the skin.
- Level V: Penetration of melanoma into the fat of the skin beneath the dermis, penetration into the third layer of the skin, the subcutis.
- To protect against too much sun exposure, Kansas City Cancer Center physicians recommend:
  - Protect skin with clothing, such as long sleeve shirts and hats with broad brim.
  - Avoid being outdoors when the ultraviolet light is strongest, particularly between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
  - Seek shade
  - Use sunscreen and lip balm with an SPF factor of 15 or more (even on hazy or overcast days). Sunscreen should be effective against both UVA and UVB rays. Frequent application is important (reapply 20 minutes after initial application), as some sunscreens are not water resistant and will wash off with swimming and degrade more quickly in hot temperatures.
  - Wear wrap-around sunglasses with at least 99 percent UV absorption to provide the best protection for the eyes and the skin around the eyes.
  - Avoid other sources of UV lights, such as tanning beds and sun lamps.
  - Protect children from the sun by using the same precautions as adults.

For more information about the incidence of skin cancer, prevention, detection and treatment, visit <http://kccancercenter.com/types-of-cancer/skin-cancer/>

***Cancer Statistic Sources: American Cancer Society (ACS), Melanoma Information Center, National Cancer Institute (NCI), Centers for Disease Control (CDC).***

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### **About Kansas City Cancer Center**

Kansas City Cancer Center is a full service hematology, medical oncology and radiation oncology practice with nine convenient locations encircling the Kansas City area. , KCCC provides a wide range of patient support, including oncology treatment, diagnostic imaging, genetic risk evaluation and testing, access to clinical trials and survivorship wellness services. Its patient-driven mission is to

equip individuals and their families with everything they need to battle the disease, manage their care and navigate the insurance issues of a cancer diagnosis – all from a close-to-home environment. To learn more about KCCC, visit [www.KCCancercenter.com](http://www.KCCancercenter.com). KCCC is a member of the US Oncology network, which supports the nation's foremost cancer treatment and research network through evidence-based medicine and shared best practices.