

## Kansas City Cancer Center Shines A Spotlight On Skin Cancer Awareness Month

Summer is nearly upon us — a time when we must be extra vigilant about protecting against skin cancer. Now ranked as the most common form of cancer in the U.S., Kansas City Cancer Center (KCCC) is working to create awareness of this disease that will affect more than one million Americans this year.

Protection from the sun and other sources of ultraviolet (UV) radiation is important, according to KCCC Oncologist John Davis, M.D. UV rays are produced by the sun, and are more intense in the summer. Overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun, says Davis, causes sunburn (erythema), premature aging (skin wrinkling), cataracts (gradual clouding of the lens of the eye), immune system suppression, DNA damage, dilated blood vessels, and most importantly, skin cancer.

“With skin cancer, it’s important to get into the habit of doing self checks and tracking new or changes in existing moles,” says Davis. “You should be 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, you should consult your physician, as this could be a melanoma. Any new mole that develops after age 40 should also be examined by a physician.”

### Did you know?

- Despite the fact that non-melanoma skin cancer cases have risen from one million in 1987 to 3.5 million in 2009, it’s one of the most preventable of cancers.
- 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.
- Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer, accounting for five percent of all skin cancers.
- 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).

Sources: American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Cancer Institute, Melanoma Information Center.

## Cover Up In The Sun

*Kansas City Cancer Center recommends these preventative measures to reduce overexposure to the sun:*

- *Protect skin with clothing, such as long sleeve shirts and hats with a broad brim.*
- *Avoid being outdoors when the ultraviolet light is strongest, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.*
- *Seek shade.*
- *Use sunscreen and lip balm that protects against UVA and UVB rays with an SPF factor of 15 or more (even when overcast). Reapply 20 minutes after initial application.*
- *Wear wrap-around sunglasses with at least 99 percent UV absorption.*
- *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.*