

About Skin Cancer



Risk Factors

- Excessive unprotected exposure to sun
- History of indoor tanning
- History of sunburns, especial early in life
- Skin that burns or reddens easily
- Personal or family history of skin cancer

Skin cancer forms in the tissues of the skin. There are several types of skin cancer:

- melanoma forms in the skin cells that make pigment,
- basal cell forms in the outer layer of the skin and
- squamous cell forms in the flat cells that make up the surface of the unprotected skin.

Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer and causes 72.8 percent of all skin cancer deaths. Left untreated, it can spread to other organs and is difficult to control. Basal cell and squamous cell cancers are less serious types and make up 95 percent of all skin cancers.¹

Skin Cancer in North Carolina

The rate of new melanoma cases in North Carolina is rising rapidly with an average increase of more than five percent per year from 1995 to 2011.

Skin Cancer Prevention

Protection from UV radiation is important year-round, not just during the summer or at the beach.

- Stay in the shade, especially from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs
- Wear a cloth hat with a wide brim
- Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays
- Use sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher and UVA and UVB protection
- Avoid indoor tanning

Anyone can get skin cancer. It is important that ways to prevent skin cancer be stressed for all ages and races.

Signs and Symptoms of Skin Cancer

- New growth on your skin or a sore that doesn't heal
- Change in size, shape or color of a mole

If you have any of these signs or have questions about skin cancer, contact your healthcare provider for an appointment.

¹ State Center for Health Statistics, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. North Carolina Central Cancer Registry. *Statistics and Reports: Cancer*. <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/data/cancer.cfm>