

# Facts About Skin Cancer

February 2009

## What You Should Know

- Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. When detected and treated in its earliest stages, skin cancer is highly curable.<sup>1</sup>
- Basal cell or squamous cell skin cancers are highly curable. Melanoma is the most common and serious form of skin cancer.
- The best way to lower the risk of skin cancer is to limit exposure to the sun (and other sources of ultraviolet light). When outdoors, long clothing and hats are recommended. For sun-exposed areas, sunscreens with an SPF of 15 or higher and sunglasses with 99-100 percent UV absorption should be used.
- Protection is equally important during childhood, since severe sunburns in childhood may be associated with an increased risk of developing melanoma later in life.
- The American Cancer Society recommends having a checkup periodically that includes an examination for skin cancer. Also to practice skin self-exams monthly and report any changes in skin growths or new growths to their physicians.

## Risk Factors

- Factors that increase an individual's risk of developing melanoma include: a personal or family history of melanoma and multiple or atypical moles. Risk factors for other skin cancers include sun sensitivity, excessive exposure to sunlight and other forms of ultraviolet radiation, fair complexion, family history of skin cancer, history of excessive sun exposure, a weakened immune system, past history of skin cancer, use of tanning booths, and occupational exposure to coal tar, pitch, creosote, arsenic compounds, or radiation.<sup>1</sup>
- Caucasians are much more likely than African-Americans to develop nonmelanoma

skin cancer and to develop melanoma.<sup>1</sup>

- Men are twice as likely as women to have basal cell cancers and three times as likely to have squamous cell cancers of the skin.<sup>1</sup>

## Incidence and Mortality

- The American Cancer Society estimated that 62,480 Americans were diagnosed and 8,420 Americans died from melanoma in 2008. In addition, an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 Americans died from non-melanoma skin cancer (basal cell or squamous cell) in 2008.
- From 1981-2000, the rate of melanoma increase slowed to 3% per year. Since 2000 melanoma incidence has been stable.<sup>1</sup>
- During 2005, 2,037 Michigan men and women were diagnosed with melanoma.<sup>2</sup>
- During 2006, 254 Michigan men and women died from the disease.<sup>3</sup>

## Stage at Diagnosis

- During 2005, 76% of all newly diagnosed cases of melanoma in Michigan were detected at the localized stage.<sup>3</sup>
- Approximately 91.2% of people diagnosed with melanoma live at least five years. Early detection is important. If detected at a localized stage, the five-year survival rate is 98.7%. If diagnosed at a distant stage, the five-year survival rate is 15.5%.<sup>4</sup>

## References:

1. American Cancer Society
2. MDCH Vital Records & Health Data Development Section, 1985-2005 Michigan Cancer Incidence File
3. MDCH Vital Records & Health Data Development Section, 1985-2006 Michigan Resident Death Files
4. SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2005 National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, MD