

The Hidden Risks Hiding in a Sunburn



Cancer CARE for LifeSM
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You may think skin cancer happens to other people. Maybe you think it only affects older adults or people with very fair skin. But skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. In fact, 1 in 5 Americans will get skin cancer by age 70.

Every day, more than 9,500 people in the U.S. hear the words: "You have skin cancer."

That should get our attention.

The Sun Can Hurt More Than You Think

A tan may look healthy. A sunburn may seem like "no big deal." But your skin remembers every time it is burned.

If you have had 5 or more sunburns in your life, your risk of melanoma, the deadliest type of skin cancer, doubles.

Even one bad sunburn can damage your skin for years.

And it is not just the sun. Tanning beds are dangerous too. They can give off 10 to 15 times more UV rays than the midday sun.

People who use tanning beds before age 35 raise their risk of melanoma by 75 percent.

Skin Cancer Does Not Always Look Like a Mole

Many people think skin cancer only shows up as a dark mole. That is not always true.

Most melanomas do not start in an old mole. They often appear on normal-looking skin.

Watch for:

- A spot that changes in size, shape, or color.
- A sore that does not heal.
- A new mole or growth.
- A dark line under a fingernail or toenail.
- A spot on the palms of your hands or the bottoms of your feet.
- People with darker skin can get skin cancer too. In people of color, skin cancer is often found on the hands, feet, under the nails, or inside the mouth.



The Good News: Skin Cancer Can Often Be Prevented

Most skin cancers are linked to too much UV light from the sun or tanning beds. That means many cases can be prevented.

Simple steps can make a big difference

- Use sunscreen every day with SPF 15 or higher
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours when outdoors
- Wear a hat, sunglasses, and long sleeves
- Stay in the shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Never use a tanning bed

Using sunscreen every day can lower your risk of melanoma by 50 percent.

Early Action Saves Lives

Melanoma is serious, but there is hope.

- ✓ When melanoma is found early, the 5-year survival rate is more than 99 percent.
- ✓ But if people wait too long, the cancer can spread. Once melanoma spreads to other parts of the body, the survival rate drops sharply.
- ✓ That is why it is important to check your skin once a month.

- ✓ Stand in front of a mirror. Look at your face, neck, chest, arms, back, legs, hands, and feet. Do not forget places that do not get much sun.
- ✓ If you see something new, changing, or strange, call your doctor.

One Small Step Today

You do not have to fear the sun. But you do need to respect it.

**Wear sunscreen.
Skip the tanning bed.
Pay attention to your skin.**

The next time you think, "It's just a little sunburn," remember this: That burn could stay with you for the rest of your life.



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