



WASHINGTON IMAGING SERVICES, LLC

## May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month.

Death from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, had been climbing steadily since 1950. Today, more than 65,000 people develop the disease each year in the US. 8,500 people will die from it in 2011. In addition to melanoma, more than 1,500,000 people this year (2011) will develop the two most common **non-melanoma** skin cancers. Both can cause significant damage and disfigurement, but most cases do not result in death.

Washington Imaging Services and The American Cancer Society recommend that everyone perform skin self-examination regularly and have a yearly skin examination by your doctor, especially if you suspect that a lump, spot, or mole may be possible skin cancer. If you are in a high-risk classification for skin cancer, it is recommended that you see a dermatologist annually.

Everyone is at risk for developing skin cancer. However, certain characteristics make people more at risk for developing skin cancer:

- people with freckles
- those with fair skin tones
- those who burn easily
- people with light colored eyes, such as green and blue eyes
- people with naturally red or blonde hair
- people who spend a lot of time outdoors
- people who have a personal or family history of skin cancer or melanoma

If you are unsure of your skin cancer risk, talk to your doctor. In the meantime, be sure to follow safe sun practices.

### **MELANOMA**

Melanoma develops in cells called melanocytes. Melanocytes are cells that are responsible for creating skin pigmentation, or melanin. Melanin is what gives our skin its natural hue. As skin is exposed to UV rays of the sun, more melanin is produced, in hopes to prevent burning of the skin. The end result is damage to the DNA in skin cells. UV rays can also be found in tanning booths and lamps, so indoor tanning is not any safer.

### **NON-MELANOMA SKIN CANCER**

Most skin cancers are classified as non-melanoma, usually occurring in either basal cells or squamous cells. These cells are located at the base of the outer layer of the skin or cover the internal and external surfaces of the body. Most non-melanoma skin cancers develop on sun-exposed areas of the body, like the face, ear, neck, lips, and the backs of the hands. Depending on the type, they can be fast or slow growing, but they rarely spread to other parts of the body.



## WASHINGTON IMAGING SERVICES, LLC

### Symptoms of Skin Cancer

- A small lump (spot or mole) that is shiny, waxy, pale in color, and smooth in texture.
- A red lump (spot or mole) that is firm
- A sore or spot that bleeds or become crusty. Also look for sores that don't heal.
- Rough and scaly patches on the skin.
- Flat scaly areas of the skin that are red or brown.
- Any new growth that is suspicious
- Keep in mind that these growths are usually painless.

### Examining yourself for signs of skin cancer

- When doing a self examination, you need to look at all areas of the body. It helps to have a mirror to view all parts of the body.
- Look for any changes to color, shape, and size to any freckle, mole, blemish or reddened areas. It is helpful to know the **ABC's of skin cancer** (Asymmetry, Border, Color, Diameter and Elevation.)
- Sometimes these areas may be itchy, scaly, or even have a crusty appearance.
- If bleeding or oozing comes from a mole or spot, it is imperative that it be examined by a physician. This is often indicative of advanced melanoma and needs to be evaluated.
- Melanoma is treatable when detected early. Moles or other spots on the skin should be self examined each month. Look for any changes in the existing areas and look for new moles.

Skin cancer can be easily preventable by the use of sun block and by limiting the exposure of your skin to harsh UV rays. Surveys show the public is far better educated today about skin cancer prevention than it was 50 years ago so why the disconnect?

Dr. Perry Robins at the Skin Cancer Foundation offers this explanation:

- **“Time lag:** The majority of skin cancers result from years of cumulative sun exposure. These cancers are most prevalent among older Americans (between 40 and 50 percent of Americans who live to age 65 will have skin cancer at least once). The incidence figures we see now greatly reflect sun-worshipping behaviors common in the US 20+ years ago.”
- **“Behavior trails knowledge:** Although people are more aware of the importance of sun protection, it takes a long time to change behavior patterns. Still, according to a joint 2007 survey by The Skin Cancer Foundation and the online women’s community iVillage, 59 percent of Americans use sunscreen at least occasionally — a 20 percent increase



## WASHINGTON IMAGING SERVICES, LLC

from a survey done just four years earlier. To combat the culturally entrenched compulsion to tan, the Foundation has launched a campaign geared to dispelling the idea that tanned skin is still in fashion. With the help of celebrities and beauty editors, our “Go With Your Own Glow” campaign is gaining momentum.”

- **“Young people’s feeling of invincibility:** Each generation has to be convinced anew of the dangers of sun damage. One of our sacred responsibilities is to show young people how mistreating their skin can seriously damage it, sometimes sooner rather than later. Melanoma is now the second most common form of cancer for young adults 15-29 years old.”
- **“Indoor tanning:** Tanning salons appeared in the US in the late 1970s. UV tanning lamps can emit harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation up to 12 times stronger than the sun. But on an average day, more than one million Americans use tanning salons. The tanning industry unfortunately tries to convince people that indoor tanning is safe — dangerous misinformation that The Skin Cancer Foundation strives to refute on behalf of the public.”

The facts about skin cancer are alarming and show how skin cancer can affect us all, directly and indirectly.

- **More than 90% of skin cancer is caused by sun exposure:** The UV rays of the sun are responsible for non-melanoma skin cancers. Unprotected exposure to these rays can be from being outdoors, tanning booths, and even through your car or home windows.
- **Skin cancer accounts for more than 50% of all cancers combined:** Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed type of cancer among men and women.
- **Each hour, a person dies from skin cancer in the U.S.:** About 2,800 people will die of non-melanoma skin cancer and about 8,000 will die of melanoma in the U.S. this year. Most of these deaths could have been prevented by simply protecting one’s self from the sun.
- **The American Cancer Society estimates that 1.5 million cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed this year.**
- **Skin cancer is most deadly for African Americans, Asians, and Latinos:** Although the risk factor is rather low for African Americans, Asians, and Latinos, skin cancer can be the most deadly for these groups.



## WASHINGTON IMAGING SERVICES, LLC

- **1 in 5 Americans and 1 in 3 Caucasians will be diagnosed with skin cancer sometime in their life.**
- **One bad burn during your childhood doubles the risk factor for melanoma later in life.**  
Protecting children against UV exposure is essential for skin health into adulthood. A blistering sun burn during childhood significantly increases the risk of melanoma as an adult.
- **Men are diagnosed with skin cancer more often than women.**  
The American Cancer Society statistics show that men are twice as likely to develop skin cancer than women. It is the most common cancer in men over 50, far exceeding the incidence of prostate cancer, lung cancer, and colon cancer. This makes skin cancer the most common cancer in men over 50.