

## **SKIN CANCER**

### **Types of Skin Cancer**

- Basal Cell Carcinoma (**BCC**)
- Squamous Cell Carcinoma (**SCC**)
- Malignant Melanoma

**Squamous Cell** and **Basal Cell Carcinomas** are caused from sun exposure you have had through your lifetime. These types of skin cancers are not usually deadly, but they do need to be treated so they do not spread.

**Malignant Melanoma** can be fatal if not caught early. Americans have a one in seventy chance of developing melanoma. One person per hour dies of melanoma in the United States.

### **What to Look For -SCC and BCC**

- Pink or red patches that don't go away
- Sores that won't heal

### **What to Look For -Melanoma**

- A:** Asymmetry- if you fold the mole in half, does it look the same on both sides?
- B:** Borders- does it have jagged, irregular edges?
- C:** Color- does it have more than one color?
- D:** Diameter- is it bigger than 6 millimeters (the size of a pencil eraser)?
- E:** Evolving- is it changing over time?

If you notice any of these signs on your moles, or if you develop new moles with these characteristics, they should be evaluated. It is a good practice to have your skin checked each year by a dermatologist and to check your skin at home monthly.

### **Risk Factors**

- Melanoma has a genetic component. If you have a family member who has had melanoma, you have 50% greater chance of developing melanoma and should be checked once a year.
- People who have large number of moles and atypical moles have increased incidence of melanoma.
- Sun exposure, tanning beds, and a history of sunburns dramatically increases your chances of all types of skin cancer. More than 90% of skin cancer is caused by sun.

### **An Important Fact to Remember.....**

- Remember that an annual full body check is vitally important. It's not fool-proof and you need to do regular self-examinations. If you notice any skin changes or feel an area was missed, call the office for an appointment.

## **Protect yourself**

- Wear sunscreen with zinc and at least SPF 30 every day. You are exposed to the sun's rays simply driving in your car and walking by windows at home or work. The best sunscreens contain zinc oxide. This ingredient will protect you from both UVA (aging rays) and UVB (burning rays) radiation.
- Avoid the sun between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM. Try to stay under an umbrella or shade trees.

Use waterproof sunscreen at the pool or beach. One adult should use 2 tablespoons of sunscreen. A family of four will go through one and a half 8 oz bottles of sunscreen in two days.

- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your scalp, face, and neck.
- Wear protective clothing. You can purchase UV protective clothing at REI or L.L. Bean. If you can see through a shirt when you hold it up to the light, it will not protect your skin from the sun.
- Sunglasses with UVA and UVB protection will help prevent damage to your eyes.

## **Protect the Children You Love**

- The majority of our sun exposure occurs before age eighteen. If children use sunscreen of SPF 30 or greater throughout these years, they can reduce their skin cancer risk by 80%.
- Infants under six months old should never be exposed to the sun. Keep babies out of the sun during peak daylight hours, and cover them with long-sleeved clothing and wide-brimmed sun bonnets.
- After age six months, put sunscreen with at least SPF 30 on children every morning.
- Teach children how to be sun smart. Provide sunscreen for nursery school or play groups, and ask the staff to apply it.

Be concerned, but don't worry excessively. Do your best to be sun smart and know your skin. With regular self-examination, professional examination, and common sense, there is little chance that a skin cancer will grow to a threatening size before it can be detected and removed.