



# You've got it made in the shade

Protect yourself from skin cancer



Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, but it is also the most preventable.<sup>1</sup> Since more than 90 percent of all skin cancers are caused by sun exposure, taking simple steps to protect yourself can make a big difference.<sup>2</sup>

## What is your risk?

Everyone is at risk for damage from the sun, but certain people are at a greater risk for skin cancer.<sup>3</sup>

- **What is your skin type?** People with light-colored skin that freckles easily, blond or red hair, or blue or green eyes are more likely to get skin cancer than people with darker complexions. Also, having a lot of moles is a risk factor.
- **What do you do?** If your work or hobbies keep you outside in the sun, your risk is greater.
- **Where do you live?** Southern parts of the country are closer to the equator and get more sun, so people who live in these areas are at a greater risk for skin cancer than those who live in the northern U.S.<sup>4</sup>
- **What's your personal history?** You are more likely to develop skin cancer if you:<sup>3,4</sup>
  - Had serious sunburns early in life.
  - Used tanning beds.
  - Had any type of skin cancer before.
  - Have a weakened immune system for any reason, including chemotherapy, organ transplant, lymphoma or HIV/AIDS.
- **What's your family history?** If one of your parents, siblings or children has had certain types of skin cancer, you have a 50 percent greater chance of developing it as well. If it was a grandparent, aunt or uncle, or niece or nephew, there is also an increased risk.<sup>5</sup>

**If you notice any change on your skin, make an appointment with your doctor. Skin cancer treatments are much more effective on cancers that are found early.**



### Sources

- 1 Prevent Cancer Foundation website: Skin Cancer (accessed December 2014): [preventcancer.org](http://preventcancer.org).
- 2 Skin Cancer Foundation website: Skin Cancer Facts (accessed December 2014): [skincancer.org](http://skincancer.org).
- 3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: What Are the Risk Factors for Skin Cancer? (accessed December 2014): [cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic\\_info/risk\\_factors](http://cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/risk_factors).
- 4 Prevent Cancer Foundation website: Frequently Asked Questions (accessed December 2014): [preventcancer.org](http://preventcancer.org).
- 5 National Cancer Institute website: What You Need to Know About Melanoma and Other Skin Cancers (accessed December 2014): [cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/skin.pdf](http://cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/skin.pdf).
- 6 WebMD website: Melanoma/Skin Cancer Health Center (accessed December 2014): [webmd.com](http://webmd.com).
- 7 Skin Cancer Foundation website: Do You Know Your ABCDEs? (accessed December 2014): [skincancer.org](http://skincancer.org).

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## Know the warning signs

The good news is that skin cancer can be cured, especially when it is found early. Knowing how to recognize the warning signs and performing a monthly skin check can help you catch a problem before it is too late. An annual exam by a dermatologist is another key part of an early detection strategy. Signs of a problem include:<sup>6</sup>

- An open sore or bump that itches, bleeds, crusts over and then repeats for more than three weeks.
- A red, irritated patch on the skin.
- A shiny bump of any color.
- A pink growth with an elevated border and a crusted indentation in the center or a growth that looks like a wart.
- A scar-like area where the skin is shiny and tight.
- Asymmetry, uneven borders, more than one color, large diameter or changes to moles – these are the signs of melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer.

## Protect yourself<sup>1,3</sup>

The best way to prevent skin cancer is to avoid spending a lot of time in the sun.

Protect your skin by staying inside or in the shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when ultraviolet rays are the strongest and most damaging. Wear sunscreen that offers ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) protection, with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or higher every time you go outside. Be sure to put on more sunscreen at least every two hours and whenever you have gone swimming or dried off with a towel or when you've been sweating a lot – even if your sunscreen is waterproof. Wear protective clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat and wraparound sunglasses that block as close to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays as possible.

## The ABCDEs of melanoma<sup>7</sup>

Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer, but it is nearly always curable if it is caught early. Know the difference between a normal, harmless mole and one that could be cancerous by evaluating growths for these five traits:

- **Asymmetry.** The two halves of the mole do not match if you were to draw a line through it.
- **Border.** An early melanoma often has uneven edges.
- **Color.** A growth that is more than one color should prompt a visit to your doctor for further evaluation.
- **Diameter.** A melanoma is usually larger than the size of a pencil eraser, although they can be smaller when first detected.
- **Evolving.** Any change in size, shape or color, or any new symptom such as bleeding, itching or crusting, is a sign that you should make a call to your doctor.

If you notice any change on your skin, including new growths, moles that are changing, sores that won't heal or even symptoms that seem like eczema or psoriasis, make an appointment with your doctor. Skin cancer is easier to treat when it is found early.

Visit [anthem.com](http://anthem.com) for more ways to get healthy and stay healthy.

## Helpful resources

For more information and tips on protecting yourself from the sun, visit the Sun Safety Alliance at [sunsafetyalliance.org](http://sunsafetyalliance.org). Or check out the SHADE Foundation of America at [shadefoundation.org](http://shadefoundation.org) for a list of fun indoor activities to keep your family entertained during the peak hours for ultraviolet radiation.

