



EL PASO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

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Protect Yourself from Skin Cancer

Frequently Asked Questions

A: Where does skin cancer come from?

Q: Risk factors for skin cancer include:

- Unprotected and/or excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays—also known as sunlight.
- Fair complexion
- Family history
- Multiple or unusual moles
- Severe sunburns as a child

Q: What are possible signs and symptoms of skin cancer?

A: Here are the main ones:

- Any change on the skin, especially in the size or color of a mole or other darkly colored growth or spot, or a new growth
- Scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or change in the appearance of a bump
- The spread of pigmentation beyond its border, such as dark coloring that spreads past the edge of a mole or mark
- A change in sensation, itchiness, tenderness, or pain

Q: Is skin cancer all the same?

A: No, here are some basic differences:

- Most skin cancer is classified as non-melanoma, which means that the cancer occurs in the cells located at the base or outer layer of skin.
- Non-melanoma cancers develop on the sun-exposed areas of the body, such as the face, ear, neck, lips and backs of the hands.
- Non-melanoma cancers can be fast or slow growing but rarely spread to other parts of the body.
- Melanoma skin cancers can occur anywhere on the body but are more common on the body trunk in men and the legs in women.
- Some experts suggest that these areas are less likely to receive sunlight routinely, and when they do, they get sunburned.
- Melanoma is far more serious than the other kinds of skin cancer. But most skin cancers are curable if caught in the early stages.

Q: How common is skin cancer?

A: One in five Americans will develop skin cancer sometime in their lives.

- Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer with more than a million cases reported per year nationally, mostly non-melanoma.
- Melanoma accounted for about 59,940 cases of skin cancer in 2007 and most (about 8,110) of the 10,850 deaths due to skin cancer each year.
- El Paso County had 27 deaths in 2007 attributable to skin cancer. That is more than twice the number for several of the preceding years.
- Skin cancer is the most PREVENTABLE form of cancer.

Q: How can I protect myself and my family from skin cancer?

A: Here are several suggestions:

- The American Cancer Society slogan is: **SLIP SLOP SLAP** (Slip on a shirt, Slop on sunscreen, Slap on a hat). It is important to use multiple forms of sun protection.
- Seek the shade, especially during peak sun hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Remember the reflection rule – concrete, sand, water and snow can reflect 85 percent to 95 percent of the sun's rays.
- Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays to protect your eyes from sun exposure.

For more information, visit:

- The American Cancer Society, www.cancer.org.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov.

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