

Need to Know: Skin Cancer

One of the most prevalent cancers in the world today is skin cancer. More accurately, there are three forms of cancer of the skin, as there are three primary types of skin cancer.

The most common, and least dangerous is a purported rodent ulcer, or basal cell carcinoma, followed by the skin cancer called Squamous cell carcinoma and finally, the most recognized form of skin cancer, which while it is the most lethal is also the rarest: malignant melanoma.

Although malignant melanoma is the rarest, because it is the deadliest it is worth learning more about it. This cancer is responsible for about one percent of cancers and is a tumor in the cells that create melanin, the melancytes. Melanin is the pigment that gives you a sun tan, and gives your skin the color it has naturally. It is also responsible for the color of your eyes and your hair, which indicates that malignant melanoma can also affect the eyes and not just the skin.

It is reassuring to know that at least for now, skin melanomas are very uncommon in children. However, because half of all the sun exposure the skin gets occurs before the age of 18, and the time it needs to develop, it is critical to prevent your children from getting sunburns.

With increasing pollution, a diminishing ozone layer and more knowledge of what UV rays can actually do, there is a growing understanding that sun exposure can be very bad for us and that we need to protect ourselves from these ultraviolet lights. It is obvious that it is the sun that causes the problems, as the number of people with skin cancer varies depending on country, the tropical countries with large Caucasian populations having the highest incidents of skin cancer. Countries such as Australia, South Africa and southern American states with a lot of sunshine and Caucasian population have skin cancer cases that are directly proportionate with the amount of sunlight and size of the Caucasian population.

Darker skin types such as those with an African American or Asian background get better protection against the sunlight because of darker skin coloring.

Ultraviolet light is part of the sunshine and it is that light that triggers the problem. UV light comes in different forms, but they are all essentially harmful for pale skin, and babies and children are particularly at risk because they have thinner skin than adults.

The cases of skin cancer have doubled every 10 years for the last 40 years. The timing of the rise of skin cancer is directly correlated with when cheap vacations to sunnier climates were introduced, and now that they are more widely available and sunbathing is such a popular pastime, skin cancer instances are set to rise. Unless people begin to take the necessary precautions to prevent being burnt by the hot ultraviolet rays from the sun, skin cancer will remain a concern.