



## Frequently Asked Questions about Skin Cancer

### What is skin cancer?

Cancer is a disease in which certain body cells don't function right, divide very fast, and produce too much tissue that forms a tumor. The skin is the body's largest organ. It protects us against heat, light, injury, and infection. It regulates body temperature and stores water, fat, and vitamin D. The two most common kinds of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. The most serious kind of skin cancer is called melanoma.

### Why should I be concerned about skin cancer?

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. The number of new cases of skin cancer appears to be rising each year. The number of deaths due to skin cancer, though, is fairly small. The good news is that skin cancer is now almost 100 percent curable if found early and treated promptly.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the main cause of skin cancer. Artificial sources of UV radiation, such as sunlamps and tanning booths, can also cause skin cancer. Although anyone can get skin cancer, the risk is greatest for people who have fair skin that freckles easily -- often those with red or blond hair and blue or light-colored eyes. Most skin cancers appear after age 50, but the sun's damaging effects begin at an early age. So, protection should start in childhood to prevent skin cancer later in life.

### Where can I learn more about skin cancer?

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is the federal government's authority on skin cancer. Contact them at 800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237) or go to the following web site:

<http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancerinfo/wyntk/skin>.

For information on melanoma, go to the following web site:

[http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancer\\_information/doc\\_wyntk.aspx?viewid=8f3e1c39-1ba0-4a7e-9088-e03c592c5395](http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancer_information/doc_wyntk.aspx?viewid=8f3e1c39-1ba0-4a7e-9088-e03c592c5395)

# The National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC)

A Project of the Office on Women's Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

---

## For More Information...

You can also find out more about skin cancer by contacting the National Women's Health Information Center (800-994-9662) or the following organizations:

### **National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service**

Phone: (800) 422-6237

Internet Address: <http://cis.nci.nih.gov>

### **National Skin Cancer Prevention Education Program**

Phone: (770) 488-4751

Internet Address: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nscpep/index.htm>

### **American Cancer Society**

Phone: (800)-ACS-2345

Internet Address: <http://www.cancer.org>

### **American Academy of Dermatology**

Phone: 847-330-0230

Internet Address: <http://www.aad.org>

### **The Skin Cancer Foundation**

Phone: 212-725-5751

Internet Address: <http://www.skincancer.org>

*August 2003*