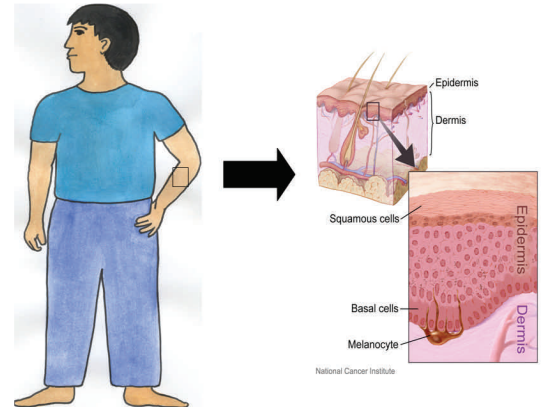




What is skin cancer?

The skin is the human body's largest organ. It prevents the body from losing water and other fluids, stores fat, cools the body when sweat evaporates and makes Vitamin D.

Skin cancer begins when skins grow uncontrollably and form tumors.



Why is skin cancer a concern for American Indian people?

Everyone one is at risk for developing skin cancer. While American Indian people are at low risk, an increasing number are reporting more sunburns.

What causes skin cancer?

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the main cause of skin cancer. Energy from the sun actually is a form of radiation and causes sun burns and tans. UV rays damage DNA, the genetic material that makes up genes. Genes control the growth and overall health of skin cells. If the genetic damage is severe, a normal skin cell may begin to grow in an uncontrolled way. UV also can cause sunburn, and other damage that makes the skin look prematurely old and wrinkled.

What are other the risk factors for skin cancer?

- **Have light skin:** light skin freckles easily and tends to burn rather than tan.
- **Live closer to the equator:** UV rays are strongest in Arizona, Florida, and Southern California and Texas.
- **Work outdoors:** spending much time in the sun without protection (hats, long sleeves, and sunblock)
- **Already have skin cancer:** An individual can get more skin cancers/tumors on additional parts of the body.

What can you do to prevent skin cancer?

- **Stay out of the sun:** between 10:00 am to 3:00 pm when UV rays are strongest.
- **Cover Up:** Wear long sleeved shirts and pants, a hat with broad brims that covers the face and sunglasses with UV protection.
- **Use Sunscreen:** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 that protects against Ultraviolet A (UVA) and Ultraviolet B (UVB) at least 30 minutes before going outside. It is important to reapply as recommended on the bottle.
- **Start early:** Protect your children's skin with sunscreen.
- **Know your moles:** look for new moles and check old ones for any changes.

What are the signs/symptoms of skin cancer?

Symptoms of skin cancer may include:

- A new growth on the skin.
- A change in an existing skin growth

Remember the ABCD's of checking moles:

A = Asymmetry: when half of the mole does not match the other half.

B = Border: when the border (edges) of the mole are ragged or irregular.

C = Color: when the color of the mole varies throughout.

D = Diameter: if the moles diameter is larger than a pencil eraser.

If you have these symptoms, it is very important to see your health care provider.

How can skin cancer be detected?

1. **Skin Self Exam:** On a regular basis, check your skin in the mirror for new moles and other skin growths. Check the soles of the feet and the palms as well.
2. **Clinical Skin Exam:** A doctor will conduct a skin exam to check current and new skin growth such as moles.
3. **Biopsy:** the doctor removes the cells from the growth for examination under a microscope.

The information in the Gathering Basket education materials is not intended as medical advice, please consult your health care provider regarding treatment decisions.



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