



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### Save Your Skin

*Melanoma Incidence and Mortality Trends and Projections – United States, 1982-2030*

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*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Ebony Wardlaw] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Ebony Wardlaw, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Summer is a time for fun, but too much exposure to the sun raises the risk for melanoma. Dr. Gery Guy is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. He's joining us today to discuss ways to protect yourself from the summer sun. Welcome to the show, Gery.

[Dr. Guy] Thanks for having me.

[Ebony Wardlaw] Gery, how common is melanoma in the U.S.?

[Dr. Guy] Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Melanoma, which is the most deadly form of skin cancer, causes 9,000 deaths in this country every year. Melanoma rates are increasing, even as other cancer rates are coming down. In fact, we've seen melanoma rates double in the past 30 years. While melanoma is more common among people with lighter skin, it's important to understand that people of all skin color can get melanoma.

[Ebony Wardlaw] What activities increase our risk for skin cancer?

[Dr. Guy] Ultraviolet, or UV, exposure is the major cause of skin cancer, and it's also the most preventable cause. Too much UV exposure from the sun, as well as the use of indoor tanning beds, can increase the risk of skin cancer. Tans and sunburns are the skin's response to damage. When people tan or sunburn, it increases their risk of getting skin cancer.

[Ebony Wardlaw] Is sun exposure risky at *all* times of the year, or mostly in the summer?

[Dr. Guy] Too much sun exposure is risky any time of year. There's also certain instances where the sun's rays are particularly intense and extra care should be taken. For example, the rays from the sun are more intense during the late spring and early summer, as well as at higher altitudes and when you're closer to the equator. The sun's rays are also more intense when they're reflected off of surfaces, such as snow, water, and sand. In these situations, even a short time outdoors could lead to overexposure and extra care should be taken to protect yourself from too much UV exposure.

[Ebony Wardlaw] Gery, what are some signs and symptoms of melanoma?

[Dr. Guy] A change in the skin is the most common sign of melanoma. This may be a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a change in a mole. A simple way to remember the signs of melanoma is to remember the A-B-C-D and Es of melanoma. A stands for asymmetrical. Does the mole or spot have an irregular shape? B is for border. Are the borders irregular or jagged? C is for color. Is the color uneven? D is for diameter. Is it larger than a pea? And lastly, E is for evolving. Has the mole or spot changed over the past few weeks or months?

[Ebony Wardlaw] What are some ways we can prevent melanoma?

[Dr. Guy] Communities can play a major role in melanoma prevention. Community-wide efforts can help reduce sun exposure. For example, increasing shade in playgrounds or other public spaces; promoting sun protection in recreation areas, including the use and purchase of hats, sunscreen, and sunglasses. Also, encouraging employers, child care centers, schools, and colleges to educate employees and students about sun safety and sun protection. Individuals can also reduce their risk for melanoma by taking steps to protect their skin from the sun while outdoors. While enjoying the outdoors, you can seek shade, especially during the midday hours when the sun's rays are most intense. Also, you can reduce your risk of melanoma by using sun protection, like wide-brimmed hats, protective clothing, sunglasses, and a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher while outside. You can also reduce your risk for melanoma by avoiding indoor tanning.

[Ebony Wardlaw] Where can listeners get more information about melanoma, Gery?

[Dr. Guy] Listeners can go to [cdc.gov/cancer/skin](http://cdc.gov/cancer/skin).

[Ebony Wardlaw] Thanks, Gery. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Gery Guy about the importance of protecting yourself from ultraviolet rays.

When outdoors, wear protective clothing, hats and sunglasses, seek shade, and use broad-spectrum sun screen. If you notice any new or unusual growths on your skin, check with your health care provider. Early detection is important for successful treatment.

Until next time, be well. This is Ebony Wardlaw for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.