

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Peter Hobson

## Preventing Skin Cancer

*Sunlight is vital for the body's production of vitamin D. But too much sun — particularly as a child — can lead to skin cancer.*

*As a prevention specialist, Dr. Hobson knows that knowledge is a powerful weapon in the fight against disease. Therefore, Dr. Hobson keeps patients up to date on the best ways to prevent diseases, like skin cancer, before they start.*

*The following are just a few of the ways Dr. Hobson teaches patients to stay safe in the sun.*



### Why Worry About Sun Exposure in Winter?

Most people think about sun protection only during summer, but it's also important to remain conscious of sun exposure during the winter months.

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, UV rays reflecting off a snowy surface put facial skin and eyes at nearly twice the risk of sun damage.

### Types of Skin Cancer

There are three basic forms of skin cancer: basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma. All three are linked to ultra-violet (UV) ray overexposure, both from the sun and tanning facilities.

UV light sparks molecular changes in skin that result in specific mutations deemed "critical to skin cancer devel-

opment." (*Recent Results Cancer Res* 2003;163:151-64.)

Earlier this year, the American Cancer Society (ACS) predicted 55,100 new cases of melanoma in 2004. In addition, the ACS projected more than a million new cases of basal cell and squamous cell cancers by the end of the year ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)).

### Basal Cell

The most common of the three skin cancers, basal cell tends to grow slowly and remain localized, as opposed to spreading. Generally found on areas of the body exposed to sunlight, it can range from a small, fleshy bump to a sore that bleeds, scabs and then repeats the cycle. Sometimes it masquerades as a red, sensitive, flat spot that bleeds easily.

### Squamous

A hard lump with red or brown irregular borders is characteristic of squamous cell cancer. An ulcer that doesn't heal may develop within the lesion. This form of skin cancer is more common after the age of 60, following years of sun exposure.

### Melanoma

Dark moles with irregular borders are hallmarks of melanoma. Itching, bleeding and changes in color are also associated with these moles. Unlike basal and squamous skin cancers, melanomas develop very quickly — often involving the lymphatic system — and are distinctly life-threatening. Melanomas are also linked to overexposure to the sun.

### Start With Self-Exams

Lesions that don't heal, moles with irregular borders and other symptoms related to skin cancer aren't as easy to detect as you might think. Ears are one "hot spot." Another particularly tricky area of the body is the scalp.

It's important that parents do a periodic "scalp check" on youngsters and that spouses do the same for each other. Start by slowly moving the fingers through the hair and exposing every inch of scalp along the way. If something doesn't look right, don't panic. It may be just a bug bite or an irritated hair follicle. But do make a note of the area (size of the lesion/mole, color, etc.) and check again in a few weeks. If there's no change — or the area is more suspicious than before — contact a dermatologist.

To learn more about how to conduct a self-exam for the detection of skin cancer, go to the Skin Cancer Foundation's Web site at [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org).



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