

Leader Talking Points: Skin Cancer

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States and worldwide.
- About 90% of non-melanoma skin cancers are associated with exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.
- Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common form of skin cancer, followed by squamous cell carcinoma (SCC).
- Melanoma is a serious form of skin cancer that begins in cells known as melanocytes. While less common than basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) skin cancers, melanoma is more dangerous because of its ability to spread to other organs more rapidly if it is not treated at an early stage.
- Having 5 or more sunburns doubles your risk for melanoma, but just 1 blistering sunburn in childhood or adolescence more than doubles a person's chances of developing melanoma later in life.
- Regular daily use of an SPF 15 or higher sunscreen reduces the risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma by about 40% and melanoma by 50%.
- When caught and treated early, skin cancers—including melanoma—are highly curable.
- While most moles, brown spots, and growths on the skin are harmless, the ABCDEs can help you detect melanoma at an early stage!
- A is for Asymmetry – Most melanomas are asymmetrical. If you draw a line through the middle of the lesion, the two halves don't match, so it looks different from a round to oval and symmetrical common mole.
- B is for Border – Melanoma borders tend to be uneven and may have scalloped or notched edges, while common moles tend to have smoother, more even borders.
- C is for Color – Multiple colors are a warning sign. While benign moles are usually a single shade of brown, a melanoma may have different shades of brown, tan, or black. As it grows, the colors red, white, or blue may also appear.
- D is for Diameter or Dark – While it's ideal to detect a melanoma when it is small, it's a warning sign if a lesion is the size of a pencil eraser (about 6 mm, or ¼ inch in diameter) or larger. Some experts say it is also important to look for any lesion, no matter what size, that is darker than others.
- E is for Evolving – Any change in size, shape, color, or elevation of a spot on your skin, or any new symptom in it, such as bleeding, itching, or crusting, may be a warning sign of melanoma.
- If you notice any of these warning signs or anything new, changing, or unusual with your skin, contact your dermatologist or healthcare provider.