

The Skin Doesn't Forget

Article Rating: NA

Submitted by: articlediner on 2006-10-22 and viewed 29 times.

Total Word Count: 1099

Author Rating:

Sample of Content:

This article outlines the basics of what to be aware of in terms of sun over-exposure. There is a brief overview of the different skin sensitivity types along with a breakdown of the different types of skin cancer. Finally the article ends with a simple guide to protecting your skin. The article is of interest to anyone who's looking for a brief summary about skin cancer.

Content:

The end of winter, no more short, cold and dark days. Spring is finally here and summer is fast approaching. Hot days and lots of sunshine. But not all fun and sun. The hot sun can pose a great danger for our skin and our children's skin. In fact, one of the most important factors for feeling young and healthy is the way we take care of our skin

during the summer months.

Over the last century, ever-increasing rates of skin cancer have taken some of the greatest tolls on all age groups, young and old. Yet most people don't realize that skin cancer is a very preventable form of skin cancer, and, that if recognized early enough, is very treatable. The simple fact is, if we take care of our skin during the summer, we can dramatically reduce the chances of ever getting skin cancer in the first place. The chance of getting skin cancer is directly related to the amount of sunlight we expose our skin to, especially during the summer. Furthermore, it has been shown that going to the solarium on a regular basis is also a risk for the development of skin cancer.

Overexposure to UV A and B light from the sun and the solarium damages skin cells. UV A light in spite of its lower energy, is received by the body in much larger doses, and penetrates into the skin easily causing damage. UV light mainly affects the skin and underlying connective tissues by decreasing the quantities of collagen and elastic fibers present in these tissues. With passing time, the skin becomes more wrinkled and flaccid. One of the most important factors in the pathogenesis of cancer is the fact that the absorbed UV light breaks down water molecules and induces the formation of free-oxygen radicals, which are toxic to certain elements of the skin.

For those of us who have a light or very fair complexion, (type I skin tone) avoidance of the sun and solarium as much as possible is recommended. The rest of us should adjust the amount of sun (UV light) exposure to our proper skin tones.

The reason its important to know what type of skin tone you have is because the lighter the skin, the less it is capable of dealing with the damaging elements of the sunlight and thus, more the skin needs to be protected.

It's not difficult to determine what your skin type is. There are six types and by using the scale below, you can determine for yourself how much skin protection you may need.

Skin type I never turns brown, only burns.

Skin type II browns very slowly and easily burns.

Skin type III browns easily and rarely burns.

Skin type IV is typical of that of southern Europeans (Mediterranean type).

Skin type V is slightly pigmented similar to those living in India.

Skin type VI is black.

If you fall into either of the first two categories, your skin must be protected at all times from the dangerous effects of the sun!!!!

Skin cancer can be broken down into Melanoma- and non-Melanoma types. The latter consists of both squamous cell- and basal cell skin cancer. Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer. The proliferation of pigmented skin cells anywhere in the body can, if not diagnosed and treated early, cause death. The frequency of Melanoma around the world is increasing at very rapid rates!!

Squamous cell type of skin cancer is also a malignant form of skin cancer that is directly related to the amount of sun exposure and can quickly spread to other parts of the body.

Basal cell type skin cancer is not malignant and thus won't spread to other parts of the body. However, there is local destruction of the affected skin areas and thus excision of the lesion is a must.

Well, you may ask how do I protect myself from the dangers of the skin cancer? The answers may not be as difficult to follow as you may think. First and foremost, always protect skin of young children and kids. Their skins are sensitive to sun exposure and burning the skin only increases the risk in later years of developing cancer. It is important to remember that the many years of continuous sun exposure increase the chance of getting skin cancer. In other words, the skin doesn't forget!! Sporadic sun exposure is more than enough to guarantee a nice brown skin color and the proper production of vitamin D in the body.

If someone wants to get a quick tan, than be sure to use self-browning creams, but remember, they won't protect your skin from sun overexposure and burning. Carotin derivative products have been shown to protect the skin from within and in general have an anti-cancer effect.

During the hot months, a good rule of thumb is to avoid strong sun exposure in the middle of the day, say between 2 and 3 pm, when the sun is hottest. Try to stay in the shade as much as possible and when going into the sun, put on a hat, sunglasses and a shirt just to be sure. Sun tanning protective creams are also a must. A wide spectrum UV protection and a minimum factor of 15 should be applied to the skin at all times for maximum protection. But remember, the best protection from skin cancer is to avoid the exposure to the skin.

Finally, and equally important, is that we recognize on ourselves any first signs of potential cancer. Especially be aware of any small wounds or scars on the skin that don't seem to heal after a month or so. Be aware of skin moles that suddenly begin to itch, bleed, peel, grow, change color or become painful. In any of the above instances, be sure to contact your dermatologist immediately for a full check up. Remember, early diagnosis and treatment along with regular screening is the best way to ensure many happy, healthy summers to come.

Dr. Randy Simor is a medical graduate from the Semmelweis Medical University in Budapest, Hungary, 1999. Since 1999, he has worked continuously within the healthcare industry as a clinical research associate, a consultant for a multi-national pharmaceutical company, and a business development director for one of Budapest's largest private outpatient, one-day surgery clinics. As an entrepreneur, Randy is owner and director of a newly established management company for medical tourism, CARE Ltd. The company primarily focuses on medical tourism for plastic surgery, dental & oral surgery, Laser eye surgery and a wide variety of other diagnostic, surgical and wellness services.

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