



# MACOMB COUNTY

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

### Educational Handout to Promote Skin Cancer Prevention Awareness

This handout has been designed for solely educational purposes and is meant to inform persons served and their guardians of the importance of maintaining up to date skin cancer screenings, based upon the most current standard of preventive care recommendations.

*\*It is ultimately the responsibility of a health care provider to advise and determine what type of treatment an individual requires based on a comprehensive understanding of the individual's medical history and presentation.*

#### Who is at high risk?

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. Some individuals are at higher risk for skin cancer than others, but anyone can get it. Risk factors may include:

- A lighter natural skin color, blue or green eyes, blonde or red hair
- Excessive sun exposure (including exposure to tanning beds and lamps)
- Skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily, or becomes painful in the sun
- A family history of skin cancer
- History of sunburns (one or more blistering sunburns as a child or young teen increases the risk)
- Older age
- A personal history of pre-cancerous skin lesions or a diagnosis of skin cancer in the past
- Certain types and a large number of moles
- People with darker skin tones are prone to skin cancer in areas that are not commonly exposed to the sun
- Being exposed to toxic substances such as arsenic, exposure to radiation, or having a condition that weakens the immune system

#### What are symptoms of skin cancer?

A change in your skin is the most common sign of skin cancer. This could be a new growth, a sore that does not heal, or a change in a mole. Skin cancers do not all look the same.

## How can I reduce my risk?

Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. To lower your risk of getting skin cancer, protect your skin from the sun's UV rays and from artificial sources like tanning beds and sunlamps.

The American Academy of Dermatology Association (AADA) suggests that individuals conduct regular, thorough self-examinations of their skin. Any unusual moles or changes in your skin should be reported to your doctor. Also, talk to your doctor if you are at increased risk of skin cancer.

For additional information on skin screenings and ways to prevent skin cancer, refer to the National Cancer Institute's website.<sup>1</sup>

## How is skin cancer treated?

To provide the appropriate treatment following an examination your doctor may want to remove any suspicious-looking skin and send it in for lab testing. Taking a sample of the affected area is known as a biopsy. This can help determine whether you have skin cancer and, if so, what type of skin cancer you have. If a screening test result is abnormal, you may need to have more tests (diagnostic tests) done to find out if you have cancer.

Because superficial skin cancers such as basal cell carcinoma rarely spread, a biopsy that removes the entire growth often is the only test needed to determine the cancer stage. But if you have a large squamous cell carcinoma, Merkel cell carcinoma or melanoma, your doctor may recommend further tests to determine the extent of the cancer.

Additional tests might include imaging tests to examine the nearby lymph nodes for signs of spreading. It is important to understand how much has the cancer may have spread to determine the most appropriate course of treatment.

## How can I protect myself?

Per the Academy of Dermatology, the following tips can help protect your skin from the sun's damaging ultraviolet (UV) rays and reduce your risk of skin cancer:<sup>2</sup>

- Seek shade when appropriate (The sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-screening-pdq>

<sup>2</sup> (<https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/skin-cancer/prevent/how>)

- Wear sun-protective clothing, such as a lightweight and long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses with UV protection, when possible.
- Apply a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Use sunscreen whenever you are going to be outside, even on cloudy days.
- Apply enough sunscreen to cover all skin not covered by clothing. Most adults need about 1 ounce — or enough to fill a shot glass — to fully cover their body. Spread sunscreen on the tops of your feet, your neck, your ears, and the top of your head.
- When outdoors, reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.
- Use extra caution near water, snow, and sand, as they reflect the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase your chance of sunburn.
- Avoid tanning beds. Ultraviolet light from tanning beds can cause skin cancer and premature skin aging.
- Perform regular skin self-exams to detect skin cancer early, when it's most treatable, and see a board-certified dermatologist if you notice new or suspicious spots on your skin, or anything changing, itching, or bleeding.
- Be aware of sun-sensitizing medications. Some common prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including antibiotics, can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight.

### Talk to your Doctor:

Make an appointment with your doctor if you notice any changes to your skin that concern you. Not all skin changes are caused by skin cancer. Your doctor will investigate your skin changes to determine a cause.

Your doctor may recommend more frequent or earlier screenings based on your risk factors, such as family history.

It is important to remember that your doctor does not necessarily think you have cancer if he or she suggests a screening test.

### For more information, review the following:

- [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic\\_info/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/index.htm)
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/skin-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20377605>
- <https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-prevention-pdq>