

INSIGHT

WTC COMMUNITY WEEKLY



Be Aware of Skin Cancer

May is **Skin Cancer Awareness Month** in the United States. Although we live thousands of miles away, learning more about the dangers of skin cancer is very important, especially since we live in a tropical country that is blessed with plenty of sunlight throughout the day.

In general, skin cancer is classified as **non-melanoma** (basal cell and squamous cell skin cancer) and **melanoma**. While the non-melanoma type usually responds to treatment and rarely spreads to other parts of the body, the melanoma type is known as the deadliest form of skin cancer which can be fatal if it's not treated early.

The skin is the largest body organ and most of us take good care of it with a range of skincare products. Take note if you find something unusual on your skin and consult a dermatologist immediately if you experience one of these symptoms:

- **Basal cell** skin cancer usually occurs on sun-exposed areas of the body, such as the neck or face. This type of skin cancer may appear as a pearly or waxed bump or a flat, flesh-coloured or brown scar-like lesion.
- **Squamous cell** skin cancer also develops in sun-exposed areas. People with darker skin are more likely to have squamous cell carcinomas in areas that aren't exposed to sun and may appear as a firm, red nodule or a flat lesion with a scaly, crusted surface.
- **Melanoma** has more complex signs and symptoms than the other two.

In most cases, skin cancer is caused by ultraviolet (UV) light exposure. UV light damages DNA, resulting in cell mutations. UV light also decreases the immune system's ability to get rid of cancerous cells.

Skin cancer is a highly preventable form of cancer. It can affect people of all skin tones. However, skin cancer in people with darker skin tones tends to be diagnosed later, when it's harder to treat.

Be familiar with your skin and be aware of any changes, detect the early signs of skin cancer by doing self-examinations in front of the mirror routinely.

Source: [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)

Tips!

To reduce your risk of skin cancer, apply sunscreen all year round and try to limit sun exposure. Wear protective clothing and accessories, like wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses.

It's important to do monthly self-exams and get annual skin checkups when you visit a doctor. These habits can help ensure that skin cancer is detected and diagnosed early, when it's easiest to treat.

The ABCDE rule

When examining your skin, follow the ABCDE rule. This is a guideline for what to look for:

- **Asymmetrical** - Cancerous spots are often irregular in shape
- **Border** - A spot may be cancerous if its border is irregular, jagged, pink, red, or darkened.
- **Color** - Cancerous spots may be uneven in color. But in some cases, such as nodular melanoma, they can be one color.
- **Diameter** - A mole or spot that's bigger than a pea may indicate skin cancer.
- **Evolving** - If a spot or mole is cancerous, it will likely change in size, shape, or color over a few months or years.

If you notice any changes to your skin, particularly with regard to the types of changes mentioned above, it's important to contact a doctor to get an accurate diagnosis.

Yours truly,
the community editor