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Important: *This information is intended mainly for use by doctors and other health care professionals. If you have questions about this topic, you can ask your doctor, or call the Cancer Information Service at **1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)**.*

Prevention of Skin Cancer

Significance

Skin cancer is the most commonly occurring cancer in the United States. It accounts for about 2% of all cancer deaths in the United States.[1] In 2003, about 54,200 individuals are expected to develop melanoma and almost 7,600 will die of melanoma.[1] There are 3 main types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma (together referred to as nonmelanoma skin cancer), and melanoma. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma are the most common forms of skin cancer. The incidence of melanoma and nonmelanoma skin cancer appears to be increasing,[2,3] although melanoma incidence rates may have stabilized in the 1990s.[4] Epidemiologic evidence suggests that exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation and the sensitivity of an individual's skin to UV radiation are risk factors for skin cancer, although the type of exposure (high-intensity intermittent versus chronic) and pattern of exposure (continuous versus intermittent) may differ among the 3 main types of skin cancer.[2,3,5]

The visible evidence of susceptibility to skin cancer (skin type, precancerous lesions) and of sun-induced skin damage (sunburn, solar keratoses), and the ability of an individual to modify sun exposure provide the basis for implementation of programs for the primary prevention of skin cancer.

References:

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