

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Skin Cancer

### What is Skin Cancer?

Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed form of cancer among men and women in the United States. The two most common types of skin cancer—basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas—are highly curable. However, melanoma, the third most common skin cancer, is more dangerous, especially among young people. Exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun, tanning beds and sunlamps is the main cause of skin cancer. The (UV) radiation enters the skin and can cause changes in skin cells that may lead to skin cancer.

### What are the symptoms of Skin Cancer?

A change on the skin is the most common sign of skin cancer. This may be a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a change in an old growth. Not all skin cancers look the same. Skin changes to watch for:

- Small, smooth, shiny, pale, or waxy lump
- Firm, red lump
- Sore or lump that bleeds or develops a crust or a scab
- Flat red spot that is rough, dry, or scaly and may become itchy or tender
- Red or brown patch that is rough and scaly

Sometimes skin cancer is painful, but usually it is not.

### What are the risk factors for Skin Cancer?

- Fair to light skin complexion
- Blue or green eyes
- Natural blond or red hair
- Family history of skin cancer
- Personal history of skin cancer
- Exposure to the sun over long periods of time
- Use of tanning beds and sunlamps
- History of sun burns early in life
- Certain types and a large number of moles
- Skin that freckles, burns, reddens or becomes painful in the sun

### How is Skin Cancer detected?

Monthly self-examination of the skin may help find changes that should be reported to a doctor. If an area on the skin looks abnormal, a biopsy is usually done. The doctor will remove as much of the suspicious tissue as possible. A pathologist then looks at the tissue under a microscope to check for cancer cells.

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## **How can the risk of Skin Cancer be reduced?**

- Limit time in the sun during midday (10:00a.m. to 3:00p.m.) even on cloudy days, during all seasons
- Cover up with clothing to protect your skin
- Wear a wide brimmed hat
- Use sunglasses that block UVA and UVB rays
- Use sunscreen of at least SPF (sun protection factor) 15 or higher with both UVA and UVB protection when in the sun
- Do not use tanning booths, beds and sun lamps

## **How is Skin Cancer treated?**

- Surgery - biopsy to remove all of the growth
- Radiation - use of high energy x-rays to kill cancer cells
- Chemotherapy - use of anticancer drugs to kill cancer cells

The best treatment for you, needs to be determined by you and your health care provider

**For more information on Skin Cancer, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

For additional copies, visit our website at [www.oakgov.com/health](http://www.oakgov.com/health)

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