With over 5 million cases diagnosed in the United States each year, skin cancer is America’s most common cancer. Fortunately, skin cancer is also one of the most preventable forms of cancer. About 90 percent of non-melanoma skin cancers and 85 percent of melanoma cases are associated with exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. By sharing facts about the dangers of unprotected exposure and encouraging people to check their skin for warning signs, we can and will save lives.

May is Skin Cancer and Melanoma Awareness and Prevention Month

With Memorial Day around the corner and the entire country gearing up for warmer weather, it is no surprise that May is Skin Cancer Prevention Month. The American Cancer Society, along with a variety of other organizations, promote May as the month to learn about preventing skin cancer.

Knowledge is Your Best Defense

What Is Skin Cancer?

Skin cancer is the out-of-control growth of abnormal cells in the epidermis, the outermost skin layer, caused by unrepaired DNA damage that triggers mutations. These mutations lead the skin cells to multiply rapidly and form malignant tumors. The main types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), melanoma and Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC).

The two main causes of skin cancer are the sun’s harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays and the use of UV tanning beds. The good news is that if skin cancer is caught early, your dermatologist can treat it with little or no scarring and high odds of eliminating it entirely. Often, the doctor may even detect the growth at a precancerous stage, before it has become a full-blown skin cancer or penetrated below the surface of the skin.

BASAL CELL CARCINOMA

Basal cell carcinomas are abnormal, uncontrolled growths that arise from the skin’s basal cells in the outermost layer of skin (epidermis).

These cancers most often develop on skin areas typically exposed to the sun, especially the face, ears, neck, scalp, shoulders and back.

Most basal cell carcinomas are caused by the combination of intermittent, intense exposure and cumulative, long-term exposure to UV radiation from the sun.

Basal cell carcinoma is the most common form of skin cancer.

Basal cell carcinoma can be locally destructive if not detected and treated early. Occasionally these cancers metastasize; and in very rare instances they can be fatal.

SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA

Squamous cell carcinoma is an uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells airing from the squamous cells in the outmost layer of skin (epidermis).

Squamous cell carcinomas are common on sun-exposed areas such as the ears, face, scalp, neck and hands, where the skin often reveals signs of sun damage, including wrinkles and age spots.

Cumulative, long-term exposure to UV radiation from the sun and tanning beds causes most Squamous cell carcinomas.

Squamous cell carcinoma is the second most common form of skin cancer.. An estimated 1.8 million cases are diagnosed each year in the U.S.

Squamous cell carcinomas can sometimes grow rapidly and metastasize if not detected and treated early. As many as 15,000 deaths occur from invasive squamous cell carcinoma of the skin each year in the U.S.

**SUN SAFETY TIPS**

**Stay in the shade.**

**Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs.**

**Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade your face, head, ears, and neck.**

**Wear sunglasses that wrap around and block both UVA and UVB rays.**

**Use a broad spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.**

**EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES**