

The Sun And Skin Cancer: A Year-Round Concern?

(NAPSA)—Looks can be deceiving. If it is not 90 degrees and sunny outside, using sunscreen may be the last thing on your mind. Yet, with skin cancer on the rise at an alarming rate in the United States, with one in three cancers a skin cancer, sun protection needs to be top of mind, year-round.

“As a pathologist, I know that most types of skin cancer can be treated successfully if caught in the early stages,” said Margaret H. Neal, M.D., FCAP, a board-certified pathologist in Tallahassee, Fla. “However, when skin cancer remains undetected, it can lead to serious and sometimes fatal results.”

Pathologists, physicians who examine tissues and fluids to diagnose skin cancer and other diseases, urge patients to alert their primary care physicians to any warning signs that may indicate a potential problem.

The three most common types of skin cancer are melanoma, basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. Cases of melanoma, the most aggressive form of skin cancer, have increased over the past 10 years more rapidly than any other form of cancer, with more than 50,000 cases reported each year. Basal cell carcinoma is the most common of all cancers, affecting 800,000 Americans each year.

Symptoms And Treatment

While these three types of skin cancer can vary greatly, each of them can be successfully treated when detected early. Some symptoms seem harmless and are too often ignored. According to the College of American Pathologists, possible symptoms may include changes in a mole or pigmented



area, including variations in size, shape, height or color of moles, nonhealing sores, reddish patches similar to psoriasis, a shiny bump, pink growth or scarred area.

Early Detection Important

If cancer is suspected, your primary care doctor or specialist will take a biopsy. A pathologist will then examine those damaged cells and work with your primary care doctor or specialist to determine the best possible treatment options for you. Treatments vary based on diagnosis, from topical medications to surgery or radiation.

Early detection can save your life. “As a physician who diagnoses cancer regularly, I urge you to make regular appointments with your specialist based on your skin type, risk factors and family medical history,” said Dr. Neal.

It is important to remember that skin damage happens year-round. The best defense against skin cancer is to stay out of the sun, in any season. But if that is not possible, always use sunscreen.

For more information regarding skin cancer types, signs and treatments, visit the College of American Pathologists’ patient information Web site, www.MyBiopsy.org.