

Children's Health

More Children Being Seen With Melanoma

by Dr. Louis Rapkin

(NAPSA)—If you think that skin cancer is something only adults need to worry about, you may want to learn more about how often this disease affects children.



Dr. Louis Rapkin

Often viewed as an adult disease, melanoma affects seven out of every million children in the U.S., according to statistics from the National Cancer Institute.

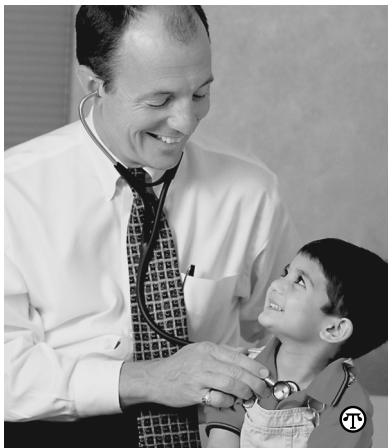
While still uncommon, some hospitals report that the number of cases is growing. As a result, more parents may want to practice preventive measures.

The Aflac Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is committed to educating parents about how to safeguard their children against the dangers of melanoma.

One important step parents can take is to teach their children the shadow rule: When you are outside, if your shadow is shorter than you are, it means UV rays are intense and you need to be extra careful. However long their shadow is, children should always apply sunscreen with SPF 15 before spending time in the sun. Parents should also learn the warning signs of melanoma:

- Asymmetrical moles.
- A mole or lesion that has irregular edges.
- The color of a cancerous spot is generally black or brown.
- The diameter is generally bigger than a pencil eraser.

While it's important to recognize these warning signs, parents should also know that about half of all children with melanoma do not follow this pattern. A significant number



One of the top childhood cancer centers in the nation treats thousands of young patients every year.

of pediatric melanomas have well-defined edges and are light in color.

This discrepancy can contribute to a serious delay in a child being diagnosed. That's why it's so important for parents to report any suspicious growths to their child's pediatrician. When identified early, melanoma is 100 percent curable. Left untreated, this type of cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

Recognized as one of the top-five childhood cancer centers in the country by *Child* magazine, the Aflac Cancer Center treats more than 350 new cancer patients each year and follows more than 2,000 patients with sickle cell disease, hemophilia and other blood disorders.

For more information, visit aflac.com or choa.org.

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