

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



July 2007

Summer Of Exposure

Skin cancer is the most common of all human cancers. Some form of skin cancer is diagnosed in more than one million people in the United States each year.

Cancer occurs when normal cells undergo a transformation during which they grow and multiply without normal controls.

There are three major types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and melanoma.

The vast majority of skin cancers are BCCs or SCCs. While malignant, these are unlikely to spread to other parts of the body. They may be locally disfiguring if not treated early.



A small but significant number of skin cancers are malignant melanomas. Malignant melanoma is a highly aggressive cancer that tends to spread to other parts of the body. These cancers may be fatal if not treated early.

Recent studies demonstrate that the number of skin cancer cases in the United States is growing at an alarming rate. Fortunately, increased awareness on the part of Americans and their health care providers has resulted in earlier diagnosis and improved outcomes.

Skin Cancer Causes

Ultraviolet (UV) light exposure, most commonly from sunlight, is overwhelmingly the most frequent cause of skin cancer.

The following people are at the greatest risk:

- People with fair skin, especially types that freckle, sunburn easily, or become painful in the sun
- People with light (blond or red) hair and blue or green eyes
- Those with certain genetic disorders that deplete skin pigment - albinism, xeroderma pigmentosum
- People who have already been treated for skin cancer
- People who had at least one severe sunburn early in life

Help Prevent Skin Cancer

Nothing can completely undo sun damage, although the skin can sometimes repair itself. So, it's never too late to begin protecting

(Over)

Summer of Exposure (Continued)

yourself from the sun. Your skin does change with age -- for example, you sweat less and your skin can take longer to heal, but you can delay these changes by staying out of the sun. Follow these tips to help prevent skin cancer:

- Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater 30 minutes before sun exposure and then every few hours thereafter.
- Select cosmetic products and contact lenses that offer UV protection.
- Wear sunglasses with total UV protection.
- Avoid direct sun exposure as much as possible during peak UV radiation hours between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- Eighty percent of a person's lifetime sun exposure is acquired before age 18. As a parent, be a good role model and foster skin cancer prevention habits in your child
- Perform skin self-exams regularly to become familiar with existing growths and to notice any changes or new growths.

Source: WebMD at www.webmd.com

Time Again for West Nile Virus



Experts say it is too soon to know just how deadly this year's West Nile season will be, but they worry that people are no longer as concerned about protecting themselves from the mosquito-borne virus as they should be.

More than one million Americans have been infected since the virus was first reported here in the late 1990s, but only a small percentage of those who are infected develop symptoms.

The elderly are most at risk for serious illness and death, but deaths have also occurred among the very young and middle-aged and younger adults.

The peak mosquito-bite months are July, August, and September. Historically, according to experts, there are very few cases at the beginning of July and quite a few by the end of July. Experts will have a better idea of how things are shaping up by the end of July.

Since there is no way to predict when and where outbreaks will occur, the best protection against West Nile virus is keeping mosquitoes from biting. Any one of three different types of insect repellants can do the job:

- **DEET.** Most commercially available bug sprays contain DEET.
- **Lemon Eucalyptus Oil.** An effective alternative for people who want a more natural product.
- **Picaridin.** Picaridin-based products are not oily like products with DEET and they do not smell.

Source: WebMD at www.webmd.com

Benefits Corner

In the past few months many CHP members have experienced problems with their claims for the surgical removal of impacted wisdom teeth being denied because, they were submitted under the *dental plan* instead of the *medical plan*. To help alleviate any further problems and to have claims processed accurately and efficiently, we offer this reminder for the future.

The surgical removal of *impacted wisdom teeth* is covered under your *medical plan*. The *regular extraction of wisdom teeth* is covered under your *dental plan*. If the procedure is one covered by the *medical plan*, please make sure that the provider is an in-network provider.