

FROM THE DESK FOR JULIE FRUTIGER

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We had a good turn out for our first clinic and it's not too soon to make your appointment for the next foot clinic which will be held August 28 from 1-4. You can call me anytime to set up your appointment.

As you read through this weeks article, think if you have any abnormal moles or areas on your skin...something that has been there and you've been wondering whether you should get it checked, but haven't. If there is enough interest, I would like to see if we could have an hour or two for you to stop by for a skin screening. I would have a qualified person do a quick screen and let you know whether you should follow up with a dermatologist. I will definitely try to set this up if you let me know you are interested.

Now that we are in the midst of summer, I would like to remind all of you to protect your skin while you're enjoying all the outside activities. Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer, with millions of cases detected every year.

Basal cell carcinoma signs and symptoms

Basal cell carcinoma usually occurs in sun-exposed areas of your body, such as your neck or face.

Basal cell carcinoma may appear as:

- >A pearly or waxy bump
- >A flat, flesh-colored or brown scar-like lesion

Squamous cell carcinoma signs and symptoms

Most often, squamous cell carcinoma occurs on sun-exposed areas of your body, such as your face, ears and hands.

People with darker skin are more likely to develop squamous cell carcinoma on areas that aren't often exposed to sun, such as the legs and feet.

Squamous cell carcinoma may appear as:

- >A firm, red nodule
- >A flat lesion with a scaly, crusted surface

Melanoma signs and symptoms

Melanoma can develop anywhere on your body, in otherwise normal skin or in an existing mole that becomes cancerous. Melanoma most often appears on the trunk, head or neck of affected men. In women, this type of cancer most often develops on the lower legs. In both men and women, melanoma can occur on skin that hasn't been exposed to the sun.

Melanoma can affect people of any skin tone. In people with darker skin tones, melanoma tends to occur on the palms or soles, or under the fingernails or toenails.

Melanoma signs include:

- >A large brownish spot with darker speckles
- >A mole that changes in color, size or feel or that bleeds
- >A small lesion with an irregular border and portions that appear red, white, blue or blue-black
- >Dark lesions on your palms, soles, fingertips or toes, or on mucous membranes lining your mouth, nose, vagina or anus

Risk factors that increase the incidence of skin cancer include:

Fair skin. Anyone, regardless of skin color, can get skin cancer. . If you have blond or red hair and light-colored eyes, and you freckle or sunburn easily, you're much more likely to develop skin cancer than is a person with darker skin.

A history of sunburns. Having had one or more blistering sunburns as a child or teenager increases your risk of developing skin cancer as an adult.

Excessive sun exposure. Anyone who spends considerable time in the sun may develop skin cancer, especially if the skin isn't protected by sunscreen or clothing. Tanning, including exposure to tanning lamps and beds, also puts you at risk. A tan is your skin's injury response to excessive UV radiation.

Sunny or high-altitude climates. People who live in sunny, warm climates are exposed to more sunlight than are people who live in colder climates. Living at higher elevations, where the sunlight is strongest, also exposes you to more radiation.

Moles. People who have many moles or abnormal moles called dysplastic nevi are at increased risk of skin cancer. These abnormal moles — which look irregular and are generally larger than normal moles — are more likely than others to become cancerous. If you have a history of abnormal moles, watch them regularly for changes.

Precancerous skin lesions. Having skin lesions known as actinic keratoses can increase your risk of developing skin cancer. These precancerous skin growths typically appear as rough, scaly patches that range in color from brown to dark pink. They're most common on the face, head and hands of fair-skinned people whose skin has been sun damaged.

A family history of skin cancer. If one of your parents or a sibling has had skin cancer, you may have an increased risk of the disease.

A personal history of skin cancer. If you developed skin cancer once, you're at risk of developing it again. Even basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas that have been successfully removed can recur.

A weakened immune system. People with weakened immune systems have a greater risk of developing skin cancer. This includes people living with HIV/AIDS or leukemia and those taking immunosuppressant drugs after an organ transplant.

Exposure to radiation. People who received radiation treatment for skin conditions such as eczema and acne may have an increased risk of skin cancer, particularly basal cell carcinoma.

Most skin cancers are preventable. To protect yourself, follow these skin cancer prevention tips:

>Avoid the sun during the middle of the day.

>Wear sunscreen year-round. Sunscreens don't filter out all harmful UV radiation, especially the radiation that can lead to melanoma. But they play a major role in an overall sun protection program. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Apply sunscreen generously, and reapply every two hours — or more often if you're swimming or perspiring. Use a generous amount of sunscreen on all exposed skin, including your lips, the tips of your ears, and the backs of your hands and neck.

>Wear protective clothing. Sunscreens don't provide complete protection from UV rays. So cover your skin with dark, tightly woven clothing that covers your arms and legs, and a broad-brimmed hat, which provides more protection than a baseball cap or visor does. Don't forget sunglasses. Look for those that block both types of UV radiation — UVA and UVB rays.

>Avoid tanning beds. Tanning beds emit UV rays and can increase your risk of skin cancer.

>Be aware of sun-sensitizing medications. Some common prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including antibiotics, can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the side effects of any medications you take. If they increase your sensitivity to sunlight, take extra precautions to stay out of the sun in order to protect your skin.

>Check your skin regularly and report changes to your doctor. Examine your skin often for new skin growths or changes in existing moles, freckles, bumps and birthmarks. With the help of mirrors, check your face, neck, ears and scalp. Examine your chest and trunk, and the tops and undersides of your arms and hands. Examine both the front and back of your legs, and your feet, including the soles and the spaces between your toes. Also check your genital area and between your buttocks.