



Central Office: 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT 06109 Phone (860) 721-2822 Fax (860) 721-2823

Berlin: 240 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT 06037 Phone (860) 828-7017 Fax (860) 828-9248

Newington: 131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT 06111 Phone (860) 665-8586 Fax (860) 665-8533

Rocky Hill: 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 Phone (860) 258-2770 Fax (860) 258-2767

www.ccthd.org

May 8, 2013

## Melanoma is a Risk to Men and Women During the Summer Months

As summer quickly approaches, many people are beginning to prepare for vacations, spending more time outdoors working on their tan before leaving for the big trip. Unfortunately, as our culture continues to value tanned skin as more attractive than pale skin, people are ignoring the reality that getting just one tan is hazardous to health. As people continue to burn themselves in the sun throughout the warm months, these behaviors, combined with a lack of proper protection from the sun, lead more individuals towards developing melanoma.

Melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer that begins in skin cells called melanocytes. Melanocytes are the cells that make melanin, which gives the skin its color and also protect the deeper layers of skin from the sun's harmful rays. As people spend more time in the sun, the skin creates more melanocytes and causes the skin to tan. However, too much time in the sun can cause melanocytes to grow abnormally and become cancerous, causing melanoma. In fact, according to the National Cancer Institute, it is estimated that there will be 76,690 new cases of melanoma and 9,480 deaths in the United States in 2013.

Melanoma can appear in both men and women, and usually starts in a size, shape or color change of a current mole, as well as appearing as a new mole on the body. In men, melanoma most often develops on the upper body, between the shoulders and the hips. In women, melanoma most often develops on the lower legs. In dark-skinned individuals, melanoma often appears under the fingernails and toes, on the palms of the hands, and on the soles of the feet. While these are some of the most common places that melanoma can occur, it can be found anywhere on the skin. It is important to check your skin regularly for any changes.

If you have one of the following, you are at risk for developing melanoma: a family history of melanoma; had one or more severe, blistering sunburns as a child or teenager; light eyes and fair skin; frequently spend time in the sun between 10am and 4pm without skin protection and have freckles.

Not only does excessive UV exposure lead to skin cancer, but it is also linked to eye damage such as cataracts, macular degeneration, and burned corneas, and injures the immune system. Further, damage from UV rays may not show up immediately, and repeated exposure leads to an accumulation of the damage. While in the past, UV-related problems typically manifested themselves in people over 60, at this time, more and more cases are found in adults over the age of 30. In fact, dermatologists report they are seeing more melanoma patients in their twenties and late teens.

According to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), the best prevention for developing melanoma is to avoid being in the sun between 10am and 4pm, the hottest times of the day. If you must be outdoors, be sure to apply 30 SPF sunscreen 20 minutes before engaging in any activities, making sure to reapply sunscreen every two hours. Also, be sure to wear sunglasses that have UV protection.

Please be advised that tanning indoors, using tanning beds and sitting under sun lamps are NOT safe practices. Contrary to popular belief, having a base tan does not prevent you from getting sunburned; in fact, it only increases your chances of skin cancer.

Additional information about melanoma is available through the American Academy of Dermatology at [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org) and National Cancer Institute at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov). Information about this or other public health concerns can be obtained from the Central Connecticut Health District, serving the towns of Berlin, Newington,

Rocky Hill and Wethersfield by visiting [www.ccthd.org](http://www.ccthd.org) or by calling (860) 721-2822.