

Health Focus of the Month: Get Ready & Prepare for the Intense Alabama Summer Sun

As we head into spring, it's time to start thinking about preparing to protect ourselves from the intense Alabama summer sun.

Below are statistics on skin cancer that should make everyone want to apply daily moisturizer with sun protection factor (SPF) 30-50 on a daily basis, seek shade when possible and wear protective clothing.

More than 3.5 million skin cancers in more than 2 million people are diagnosed in the United States annually.

Current estimates are that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Basal cell (BCC) and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) are the



two most common forms of skin cancer, but are easily treated if detected early with 95% cure rates.

By 2015, it is estimated that one in 50 Americans will develop melanoma in their lifetime.

Caucasians and men older than 50 are at a higher risk of developing melanoma than the general population.

Melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25-29 years old and the second most common form of

cancer for adolescents and young adults 15-24 years old.

Exposure to tanning beds increases the risk of melanoma, especially in women aged 45 years or younger.

Melanoma survivors have an approximately nine-fold increased risk of developing another melanoma compared to the general population.

On average, one American dies from melanoma every hour - or 9480 deaths in 2013. Other skin cancers (BCC, SCC and others) will cause approximately 3070 deaths in the United States in 2013.

The most important risk factor for BCC and SCC is exposure to ultraviolet

light.

Risk factors for melanoma include:

- More than 50 moles
- Atypical moles
- Light skin
- Freckles
- A history of sunburn
- Family history of

melanoma

Individuals with a history of skin cancer, family history of skin cancer or multiple risk factors should have a full-body skin exam by a board-certified dermatologist at least annually and perform regular self-exams for new and changing moles.

*Corey L. Hartman, MD,
FAAD, Skin & Wellness
Center of Alabama*