



BEWARE OF THE SUN

By Chad Eberhardt



Somewhere along the line it was decreed that a tanned Caucasian face is a healthy face.

But now we know that's not true.

Tanned skin is an abnormal condition, the body's defense against the sun's harmful ultraviolet light.

Yet we still ignore the painful messages the body attempts to send us.

Excessive exposure to sun radiation is a cancer risk of major degree.

You don't have to be an official sunbather to be at risk. By working long hours, year after year, out on the golf course, we rank near the top of high risk groups.

Since our occupation doesn't allow us to completely avoid direct sun exposure, the regular use of sunscreens or sunshades is a necessary step to counteract the adverse effect of sun damage.

You must constantly remind yourself that you are at risk to develop some form of skin cancer.

Early detection and removal is extremely important.

There are three types of sun related skin cancer. They are: Squamous cell carcinoma; Basal cell carcinoma; and Malignant melanoma.

Squamous cell carcinoma usually occurs on exposed parts in fair-skinned individuals who sunburn easily and tan poorly.

They tend to develop slowly in the course of a few months. A firm, fleshy, hard-surfaced lump develops. In some cases, it looks like a wart. In others, it looks like an ulcer.

The lower lip, the ears, and the hands are common sites.

Go to your physician immediately if you develop a lump that does not heal in two weeks.

Basal cell carcinoma is the most common of the three types of skin cancer.

These lesions grow slowly, attaining a size of 1-2cm in diameter only after a year's growth. Unlike the other two skin cancers, it does not spread to other parts of the body until it has been present for a long time.

A small, flesh-colored, or sometimes pearly-looking lump appears on the skin. A common site is the face. The lump grows steadily and within about six weeks becomes an ulcer which may bleed. Scabs may form, but the ulcer does not heal.

Malignant melanoma is the most serious of the three types.

It is the leading cause of death from skin disease. Melanoma is ranked as the ninth most common cancer.

Deaths from malignant melanoma are increasing at a faster rate than death from any other malignant tumor disease except lung cancer. There is a trend toward a younger age of incidence each year.

Unlike the other two, malignant melanomas quite often spread throughout the body.

The most common symptom is a change in appearance of an existing mole or development of a new mole.

There are four mole features to look for in recognizing malignant melanoma: 1. Asymmetric growth; 2. Black border that "spills" out beyond the edges; 3. Variations in color consisting of browns, blacks, blues, reds, and whites; 4. Size of the melanoma tends to be greater than 6mm before it is recognized.

Because malignant melanoma may spread quickly, early recognition, diagnosis, and treatment is essential. The longer melanoma goes untreated, the lower the survival rate.

The three sun related skin cancers have become relatively common. Not too long ago they were considered very deadly.

Today, as a result of increased public awareness of early detection, most skin cancers can be cured surgically.

Nonetheless, statistics still show skin cancer is on the rise. Since we are likely candidates, we cannot ignore even the slightest abnormality.

Make it a point to relay the importance of vigorous personal surveillance to all your employees.

You cannot paint an ugly enough picture!

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