Office of Air and Radiation (6205J) EPA-430-F-10-020 July 2010

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

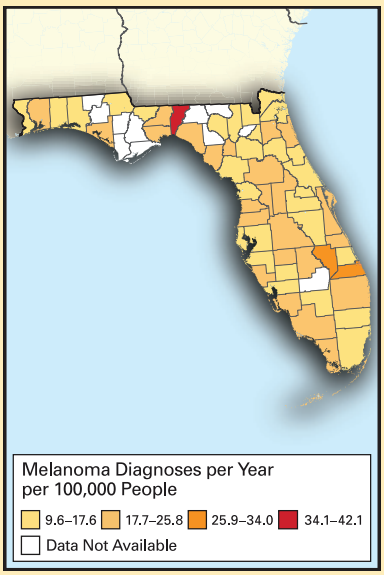
Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.[1-4] This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for Florida and the United States as a whole.

just the facts: *Skin Cancer in Florida*

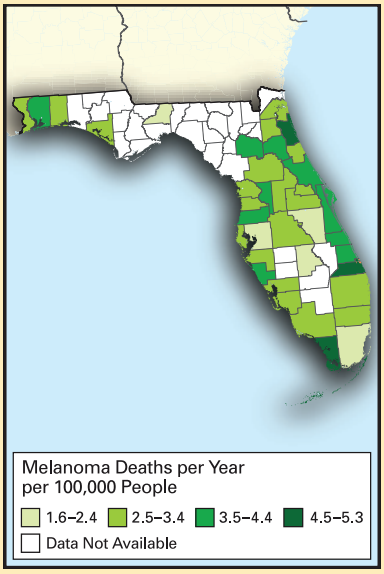
- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 37.7% of white adults in Florida had at least one sunburn in the past year.[5] Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.[6-8]
- **New Cases of Melanoma.** An estimated 4,920 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.[2] Melanoma is responsible for about 75% of all skin cancer deaths.[9,10]
  - Since 1981, the rate of new melanoma diagnoses among white males has increased by 74% and by 43% among white females. However, the percentage of advanced-stage melanoma increased for white females and decreased for white males.[11,12]
  - Jefferson County has the 7th highest rate of melanoma diagnoses among all counties nationwide—135% above the national average from 2002–2006.[9]
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 626 people in Florida die of melanoma every year.[13] Since 1975, the death rate among residents over the age of 50 in Florida has almost doubled.[13]
  - St. Johns County had the highest melanoma death rate in the state—96% higher than the national average from 2002–2006.[13]

[1–43] All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006[9]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



Melanoma Death Rates, 2002–2006[13]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



survivor story: *Cindy Dick*

In 2003, my back started itching a lot. I ignored it at first, but after talking with a co-worker about his wife's treatment for melanoma, I realized I should see a dermatologist. Soon after visiting my doctor, I got the shocking results: I had Clark level IV melanoma, which meant the cancer had spread into a deep layer of my skin. The sentinel node biopsy had found two positive lymph nodes, one under each arm.

To treat the melanoma, I had two separate surgeries. Next, I spent a month on IV interferon daily followed by self-injections 3 times weekly for a year. The treatment made me fatigued, feverish, and achy, but fortunately it was successful. I underwent interferon therapy at the same time as a 23-year-old man also diagnosed with melanoma. Sadly, he died 4 years after we met.

Since my diagnosis, I've tried to spread the word about skin cancer prevention. The damage to my skin happened while playing outdoor sports during my teens and twenties. I still spend time outdoors with my son but we always apply plenty of sunscreen. As a Fire Chief, I often have the opportunity to speak to the public, and I like to tell people: you don't have to burn, but you don't have to be a recluse either!

Cindy Dick, the Tallahassee, Florida, Fire Chief, was diagnosed with skin cancer at the age of 37.

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facts about: *Skin Cancer*

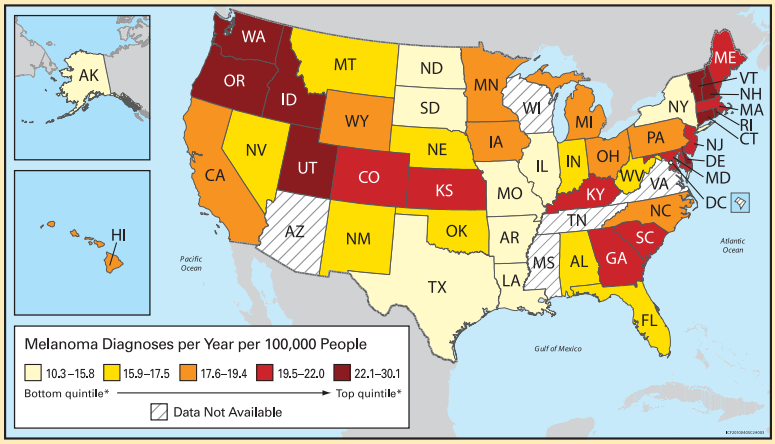
The Cost of Skin Cancer

In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost $2 billion annually.[14-15]

statistics: *Cause for Concern*

- **In 2009, more than 1 million people were diagnosed with skin cancer, making it the most common of all cancers.**[1-4] More people were diagnosed with skin cancer in 2009 than with breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined.[2] About **1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime.**[16]
- **One American dies of melanoma almost every hour.**[2]
- **Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults (15-29 years old).**[17]
- **For people born in 2006, 1 in 53 will be diagnosed with melanoma**[18]**—nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.**[19]

National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006[20]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages, Age-adjusted Rates



* Please note that delays in reporting melanoma cases to cancer registries are more common since they are usually diagnosed and treated in non-hospital settings such as physician offices. States are grouped into quintiles based on rates of melanoma diagnoses. A quintile is a statistical "block" representing 20% of a total. Because data are available for only 45 states, each quintile includes nine states. For example, the nine states with the highest melanoma rates—22.1 to 30.1 diagnoses per 100,000 residents every year—are in the top quintile.

what works: *An Ounce of Prevention*

- **Unprotected exposure to ultraviolet light—a known human carcinogen—is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer.**[6,16,21-25] Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one's risk.[2-4,26,27]
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one's life.**[28-34] Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.[2,35-39]
- The CDC found evidence that **education and policy approaches in primary schools (for children) and in recreational or tourism settings (for adults) can improve sun safety behaviors.**[40-41]
- Student self-reported data[42]—collected as part of the U.S. EPA's SunWise Program—showed that **teachers using the SunWise Tool Kit for 1-2 hours yearly can spur increases in students' sun safety knowledge and attitudes and small to modest improvements in short-term sun safety behaviors.**[43]
  - Using the data mentioned above, published modeling results show SunWise teaching between 1999 and 2015 could prevent more than 50 premature deaths and 11,000 future cases of skin cancer, saving the country more than $30 million in medical costs and productivity losses.[43]

[1–43] All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

skin cancer prevention: *Action Steps*

- **Do Not Burn.** Overexposure to the sun is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer.
- **Avoid Sun Tanning and Tanning Beds.** UV light from tanning beds and the sun causes skin cancer and wrinkling.
- **Use Sunscreen.** Generously apply a broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Reapply at least every two hours, and after swimming or sweating.
- **Cover Up.** Wear protective clothing, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses with 99-100% UVA/UVB protection, when possible.
- **Seek Shade.** Seek shade when the sun's UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- **Watch for the UV Index.** Pay attention to the UV Index when planning outdoor activities to prevent overexposure to the sun.