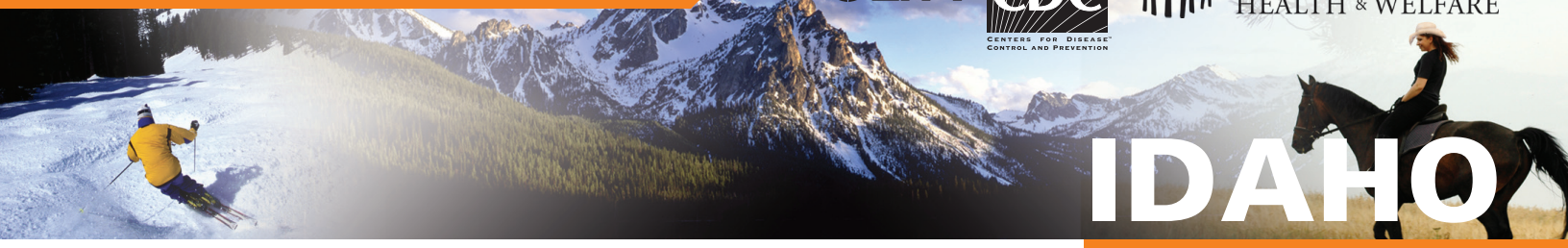
Office of Air and Radiation (6205J) EPA-430-F-09-062 May 2009

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

EPA CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Idaho Department of Health & Welfare



IDAHO

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

skin cancer: *Increasing Risk in Idaho*

- **Sunburns**. A 2004 survey found that 48.5% of white adults in Idaho 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**. The annual rate of new melanoma diagnoses—responsible for 75% of all skin cancer deaths—was 34% higher in Idaho than the national average and was the 7th highest in the U.S. from 2001-2005.[10,11] An estimated 360 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2008.[2]

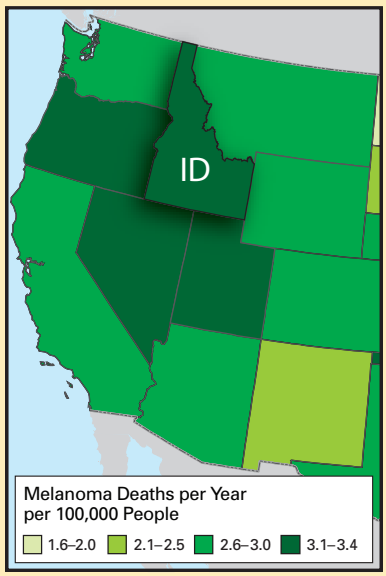
  - Among whites—who are at the highest risk for melanoma—Idaho had the 11th highest melanoma incidence rate in the U.S. from 2001-2005.[12]

  - New diagnoses of melanoma increased at a rate of about 3.6% per year in Idaho from 1975 to 2006.[9] The rate of increase was higher for males (4.2% per year) than for females (2.8% per year).[9]

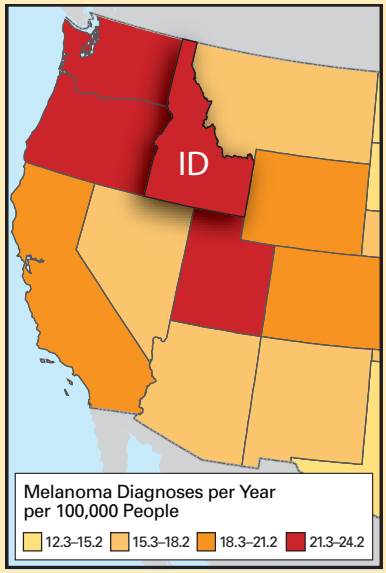
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** Idaho had the highest melanoma death rate nationally from 2001-2005—26% higher than the U.S. average.[13] About 40 people in the state die of melanoma every year.[14]

[1–42] All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

Melanoma Death Rates, 2001–2005[14]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2001–2005[10]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



survivor story: *Carol Julius*

"You ought to get that checked out…it looks funny." Despite my friend's concern, I waited an entire year to have the spot on my ankle checked by a doctor—what a mistake! I was shocked to hear I had melanoma. By the time it was diagnosed, it had spread from my ankle to my upper thigh. It took three surgeries to remove the cancer from my body. Meanwhile, I dealt with fatigue and body aches for a year as I went through interferon therapy. Therapy and surgery aren't a "cure all for sure," but I've been in remission for 3 years now!

I knew skin cancer ran in my family—I'm of Swedish descent, so my fair skin puts me at a higher risk—but I never thought that it would happen to me.

Having melanoma changed my perspective on life and sun protection. I try to worry less and enjoy moments more, and I can't help but spoil my grandkids. I still love to spend time outdoors, but now I always wear sunscreen and a long-sleeved shirt, pants, and a hat, even on cloudy days. I also follow up with my dermatologist regularly. And I never miss an opportunity to remind my family and friends to cover up and use sunscreen.

Carol Julius, a Boise, Idaho resident, was 50 years old when she was diagnosed with Stage IIIA melanoma.

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facts about: *Skin Cancer*

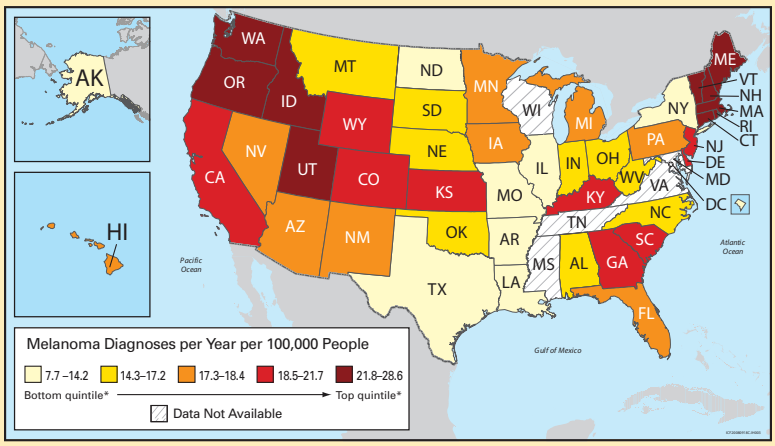
The Cost of Skin Cancer

In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost $2 billion annually.[15-16]

statistics: *Cause for Concern*

- **In 2008, 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 2008 than with breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined.[2] About **1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime.**[17]
- **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).**[18]
- **For people born in 2005, 1 in 55 will be diagnosed with melanoma**[13]**— nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.**[19]

National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2001–2005[12]
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 and D.C., four quintiles include nine states, and one includes 10. For example, the ten states with the highest melanoma rates—21.8 to 28.6 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.**[6,17,20-24] Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one's risk.[2-4, 25-26]
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one's life.**[27-33] Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.[2, 34-38]
- 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.**[39-40]
- Student self-reported data[41]—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.**[42]
  - 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.[42]

[1–42] 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.