Office of Air and Radiation (6205J) EPA-430-F-09-064 May 2009

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

MASSACHUSETTS

survivor story: *Heather Horne Fraelick*

When I first learned I had melanoma in 2005, I was scared to death. My grandmother worked with a dermatologist and never had positive stories about melanoma patients. My first surgery was to remove the skin lesion and biopsy my lymph nodes. Forty-five stitches and 19 staples later, it looked like I'd been bitten by a shark.

Two years later, the cancer was back. Since I had been previously diagnosed with melanoma, I was having my skin examined by my dermatologist every three months. We caught it early, and the cancer hadn't spread to my lymph nodes. I had a second surgery to remove a melanoma in situ from the same place as before.

This experience has taught me the importance of constant watchfulness. At an early stage, melanoma is treatable, but at an advanced stage, it can be deadly. Make note of any new changes in your skin—like moles, spots, itching, or bleeding—and get them checked out by a doctor as soon as possible.

Heather Horne Fraelick volunteers with the Melanoma Foundation of New England to educate students about the risks of sun exposure and tanning beds.

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

small state: *Big Problem*

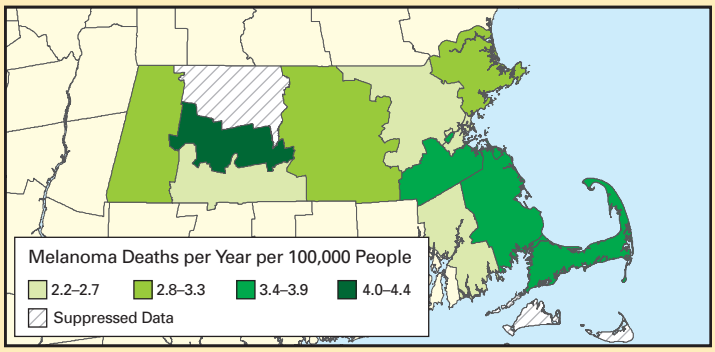
- **Sunburns on the Rise**. A 2004 survey found that 43% of white adults in Massachusetts had at least one sunburn in the past year—an increase from 35% in 1999.[5] Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.[6-8]

- **New Cases of Melanoma**. The rate of new melanoma diagnoses—responsible for 75% of all skin cancer deaths—was 26% higher in Massachusetts than the national average and was the 9th highest in the U.S. from 2001-2005.[9,10] An estimated 2,000 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2008.[2]
  - Nantucket County has one of the top 5 rates of new melanoma diagnoses among counties nationwide, 146% above the national average.[11]

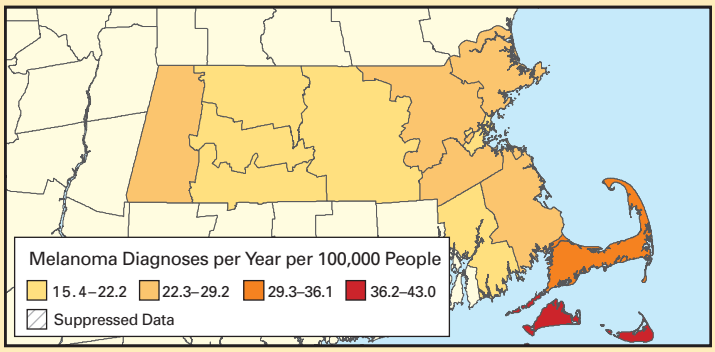
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** More than 200 people in Massachusetts die of melanoma every year.[9] Massachusetts had the 15th highest melanoma death rate nationally from 2001-2005—7% higher than the U.S. average.[12]
  - Hampshire County has the highest melanoma death rate in the state, 63% higher than the national average.[9]

[1–41] All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

Melanoma Death Rates, 2001–2005[9]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2001–2005[9]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



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facts about: *Skin Cancer*

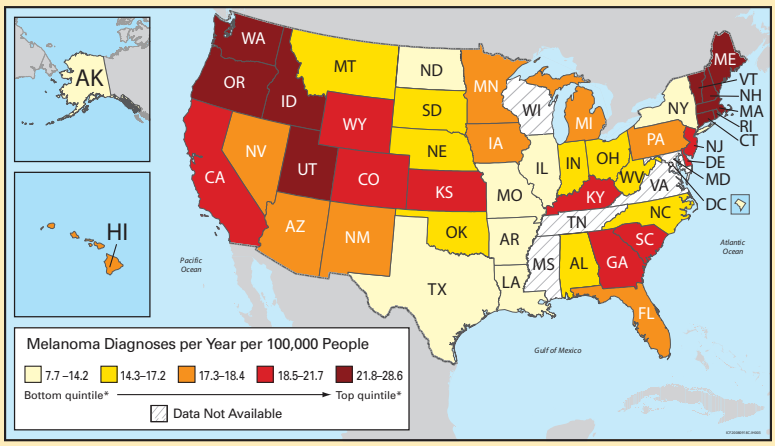
The Cost of Skin Cancer

In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost $2 billion annually.[13-14]

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.**[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 2005, 1 in 55 will be diagnosed with melanoma**[12]**— nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.**[18]

National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2001–2005[15]
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.**[6,16,19-23] Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one's risk.[2-4, 24,25]
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one's life.**[26-32] Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.[2, 33-37]
- 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.**[38-39]
- Student self-reported data[40]—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.**[41]
  - 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.[41]

[1–41] 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.