Office of Air and Radiation (6205J) EPA-430-F-10-031 August 2010

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

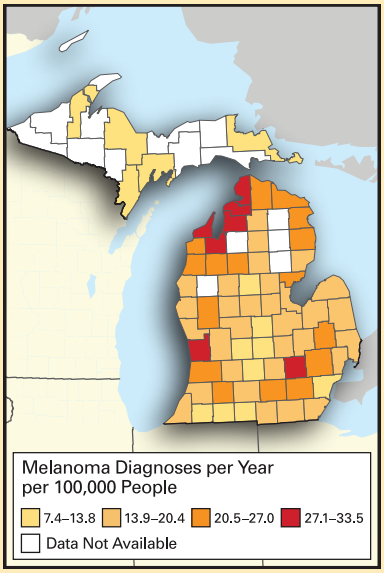
Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.[1-4] This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for Michigan and the United States as a whole.

just the facts: *Skin Cancer in Michigan*

- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 45.6% of white adults in Michigan 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 2,240 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.[2] Melanoma is responsible for about 75% of all skin cancer deaths.[9,10]
  - During 2006, 31.1% of all newly diagnosed cases of melanoma in Michigan had spread to other organs before detection.[11] If melanoma is detected after it has spread, the five-year survival rate is 15.9%.[12]
  - Grand Traverse County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state—higher than about 97% of counties nationwide.[9]
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 248 people in Michigan die of melanoma every year. Since 1975, the melanoma death rate has almost doubled.[13]
  - From 2002–2006, melanoma had the fourth fastest rising death rate among all cancers in Michigan.[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: *Ellen Simmons*

My battle with melanoma began when I noticed a dark mole on my thigh changing; it had irregular borders and bled occasionally. Three months later, I had the mole biopsied. The diagnosis shocked me: I had Stage III melanoma.

Even though I work with surgical patients, I was not prepared to hear that I had cancer. On the day I found out, I watched my young daughter perform in a play before I shared the news with my family. I remember watching her, wondering if I would see her graduate from high school. To remove the melanoma, I had a wide excision on my thigh and eight other moles removed; that was 14 cancer-free years ago.

Growing up on a lake in Iowa, I never wore sunscreen. A tan was important to me, and I often used tanning beds as an adult. I now know all too well the cost of a tan; it's not worth it. Today, I always use sunscreen and get a full-body check by my doctors every six months. If you catch it early, melanoma is a curable cancer. I often think how my prognosis might have been different if I had waited another few months to have my original biopsy. I am thankful every day for that decision.

Ellen Simmons, a resident of Bath, Michigan, was 44 years old when she was diagnosed with Stage III melanoma.

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facts about: *Skin Cancer*

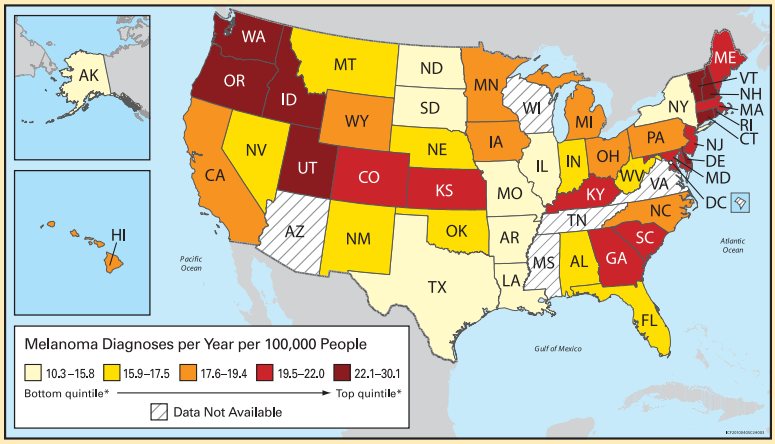
The Cost of Skin Cancer

In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost $2 billion annually.[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 2009, 1 in 58 will be diagnosed with invasive melanoma**[18]**—more than 25 times the rate for people born in 1935.**[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.