Office of Air and Radiation (6205J) EPA-430-F-09-067 May 2009

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

RHODE ISLAND

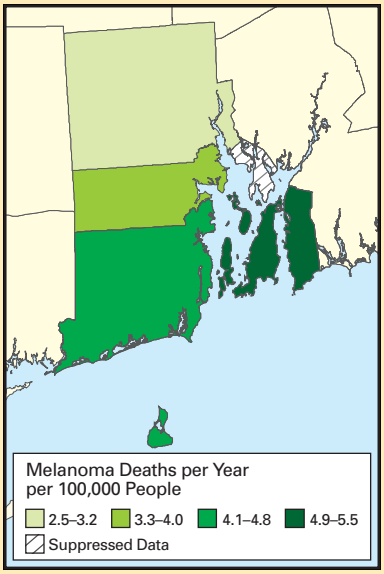
Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.[1-4] This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for Rhode Island and the United States as a whole.

small state: *Big Problem*

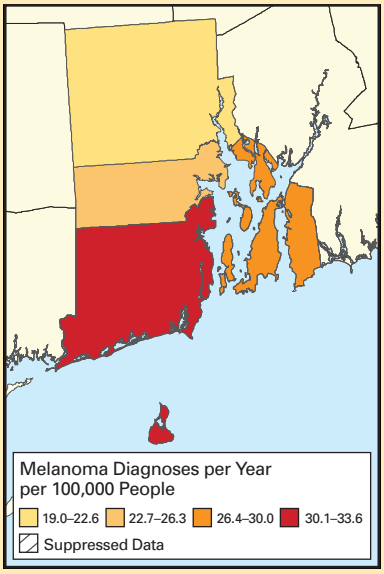
- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 38.7% of white adults in Rhode Island had at least one sunburn in the past year.[5] Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.[6-8]
- **New Cases of Melanoma.** The rate of new melanoma diagnoses—responsible for 75% of all skin cancer deaths—was 34% higher in Rhode Island than the national average from 2001-2005 and was the 6th highest in the U.S.[9,10] An estimated 300 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2008.[2]
  - Washington County has the highest rate of melanoma diagnoses in the state, 92% above the national average.[9]
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** Nearly 40 people in Rhode Island die of melanoma every year.[11] Rhode Island had the 8th highest melanoma death rate nationally from 2001-2005—14.8% higher than the U.S. average.[12]
  - Newport County has the highest melanoma death rate in the state, 104% higher than the national average.[11]

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

Melanoma Death Rates, 2001–2005[11]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



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



survivor story: *Tim Fater*

Growing up in Newport, RI, I was always in the sun—whether I was playing sports, sailing, surfing, golfing or working at the beach. Getting sunburned was an annual thing—part of summer. It finally caught up with me in 2005, when an unusual mole on my forearm returned. The result: malignant melanoma.

I was 22 when they caught the cancer. A year and a half earlier I had a spot in the same place removed, but I was told it was benign. Now the doctors were telling me both the new and old spots were melanoma, and my future was uncertain, at best. Three surgeries and a year-long intensive interferon treatment later, I was told the measures had been successful and there was no evidence of cancer, though I would have to live aware of my heightened risk of a recurrence.

Being smart in the sun doesn't mean staying inside all day; it means always taking care of yourself when you're outdoors. It also means knowing your skin and going to the doctor immediately when you notice any changes. I'll do both for the rest of my life.

Tim Fater volunteers with a local melanoma organization and mentors current melanoma patients and survivors.

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facts about: *Skin Cancer*

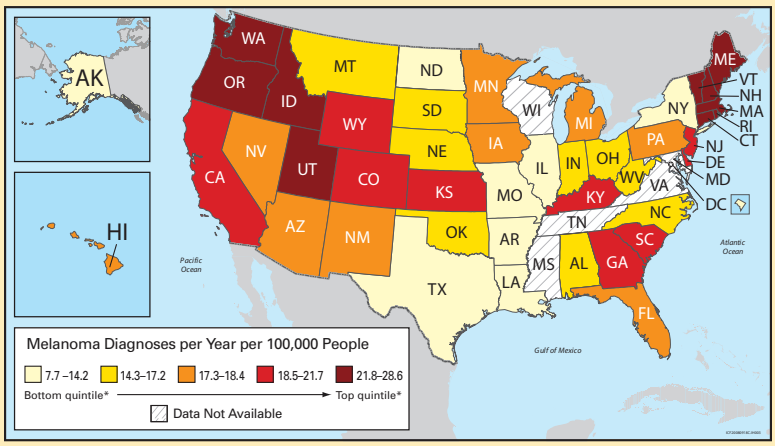
The Cost of Skin Cancer

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.