8 risk factors for skin cancer

- Red or blond hair, fair skin, freckles and blue or light-colored eyes
- More than 50 moles
- History of frequent or intense sun exposure
- History of tanning bed use
- One or more blistering sunburns
- Family history of melanoma
- Personal history of melanoma
- Personal history of basal cell and/or squamous cell skin cancers

If you have one or more of these risk factors, consult your doctor or schedule a skin cancer screening exam.

Most skin cancers fall into one of these three categories:

- **Basal cell** is a slow-growing cancer that seldom spreads.
- **Squamous cell** is more likely than basal cell to spread, but it is much less common.
- **Melanoma** makes up only 2 percent of skin cancers, but causes the most skin cancer deaths.

Having dark skin does not protect you from skin cancer. The disease is increasing among Black and Hispanic people.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States.

Always be on the lookout for moles, spots or bumps that change or grow.
Lower your skin cancer risk

Stay in the shade
Look for shady areas when outside. Avoid going outdoors between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Use sunscreen and lip balm
Apply liberally, 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours.

Cover up
Wear dark, tightly woven clothing.
Pick a hat with a large brim to protect your ears and neck.

Use extra caution
Water, snow and sand amplify the sun’s rays.

Skip the tanning bed
Tanning beds are not a safe alternative to the sun.

Wear sunglasses
Look for lenses that provide both UVA and UVB protection.

Our cancer prevention specialists are experts in cancer risk reduction and early detection.

Appointments available 713-745-8040

© The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
August 2023 | 713-792-3383