



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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SKIN CANCER: THE MOST COMMON CANCER IN MARYLAND

County residents advised to be sun safe, not sun sorry.

LEONARDTOWN, MD (May 10, 2006) – “Now that the warmer weather is here, we should remember to protect ourselves from the most common cancer in Maryland: skin cancer. The primary prevention of skin cancer is to reduce exposure to UV light by avoiding sun exposure, especially between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; wearing sun-protective hat and clothing, and sunglasses when exposed to sunlight; using sunscreens and lip balms with a SPF of 15 or higher; and avoiding artificial sources of UV light, such as tanning booths and tanning lamps,” reports Karen Russell, M.S., R.N., Wellness and Health Promotion Program manager at St. Mary's County Health Department.

“In addition to prolonged exposure of sunlight and artificial UV light, other major risk factors of skin cancer include: certain types of moles; and having fair skin, freckles, red or blond hair, and personal and family history of skin cancer,” says Russell. The two major groups of skin cancer are non-melanomas and melanomas. The most common forms of non-melanoma are basal cell and squamous cell cancers that rarely spread to other parts of the body.

(more)

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On the other hand, melanoma skin cancer, which develops from the melanocyte cells that produce melanin for skin color, is less common but the deadliest form of skin cancer and can spread to other parts of the body, "continues Russell. According to American Cancer Society estimates, over 62,000 individuals will be diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer and almost 8,000 people will die from the disease in the United States during 2006.

The American Cancer Society recommends that individuals check their own skin once a month and that a skin examination to be a part of routine cancer checkups. Spots on the skin that are new or that change in size, shape, or color require physician's attention. "Our job is to educate the public about skin cancer and how people can protect themselves," says Russell. " We hope that these practices will make them safer in the sun, and not sorry later on."

To schedule as Sun Safety display or presentation, please contact Tobi Newberry, Health Educator at 301-475-4346.

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