



Chronicle of Indiana Cancer Control

May 2024

Melanoma and Skin Cancer

The month of May is focused on shining light on melanoma and skin cancer. Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays causes most cases of melanoma, the deadliest kind of skin cancer. To lower your skin cancer risk, protect your skin from the sun and avoid indoor tanning.

The weather is getting warmer and summer is full of outdoor activities. You probably put sunscreen on yourself and your kids when you go to the pool or the beach, but did you know you should protect your skin with more than just sunscreen anytime you're outside?

Sun protection is important year-round, and it's best to use several different kinds. When you're working in the yard, watching a ballgame, or taking an afternoon walk, make sun safety an everyday habit so you can avoid getting a sunburn and lower your chance of getting cancer.¹

¹ [CDC Skin Cancer Awareness](#)

Skin Cancer vs Melanoma



Skin cancer is the out-of-control growth of abnormal cells in the epidermis, the outermost skin layer, caused by unrepaired DNA damage that triggers mutations. These mutations lead the skin cells to multiply rapidly and form malignant tumors.

Melanoma is a cancer that develops from melanocytes, the skin cells that produce melanin pigment, which is what gives skin its color. Melanoma is triggered by intense intermittent sun exposure that leads to sunburn.²

² [Skin Cancer Foundation](#)

Protect Yourself and Learn More

- Stay in the shade during late morning through mid-afternoon
- Wear a long sleeve shirt and pants to protect your skin from the sun
- Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours and after swimming, sweating or toweling off
- Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's UV rays in as little as 15 minutes³
- Read this skin cancer survivor story: "[The Sun Is My Vice](#)"
- Visit [Outrun the Sun](#) to learn about their 20th anniversary celebration of survivors, donors and friends along with many other resources available
- One in five Americans will develop skin cancer by the age of 70³
- Indoor tanning devices can emit UV radiation in amounts 10 to 15 times higher than the sun at its peak intensity³
- More people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year in the U.S. than all other cancers combined³
- In Indiana from 2016-2020, 8,147 people were diagnosed with Melanomas of the skin while 937 individuals died from melanoma. While Indiana's incidence of melanoma is lower than the national rate, our mortality rate is slightly higher.

³ [Skin Cancer Foundation](#)

To **promote**, **protect**, and **improve** the health and safety of all Hoosiers

Indiana Department of Health

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