



Health Services

# University of Oklahoma Student Affairs

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**Charles B. Goddard Health Center**  
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**Cryosurgery** Freezes off the growth.

**Laser Therapy** Burns off the growth.

**Radiation** Radiation (use of high-energy rays) is applied to the growth. The radiation damages cancer cells and stops them from growing.

**Topical Chemotherapy** The chemotherapy is applied via rubbing cream on the growth.

Remember, skin cancer is highly curable, when detected early, and highly preventable. By following the tips for prevention and being aware of characteristic marks (moles, birthmarks, etc.) abnormalities can be detected early before any serious problems occur.

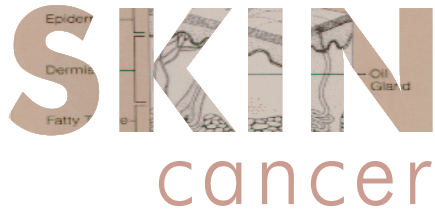
#### References

- [www.cancerresearchfdn.org](http://www.cancerresearchfdn.org) (Cancer Research Foundation of America)
- [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) (American Cancer Society)
- [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org) (Skin Cancer Foundation)
- [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) (National Cancer Institute)
- [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org) (American Academy of Dermatology)
- [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) (U.S. Food and Drug Administration)



Meeting the health needs of OU students, faculty, staff, and dependents

# Health Services



### What is Skin Cancer?

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers, however it accounts for only 1-2% of all cancer deaths. The American Cancer Society estimates that 40-50% of Americans that live to age 65 and older will have skin cancer at least once in their life.

Skin cancer affects the epidermis (outside layer) of the skin. The epidermis is made up of squamous cells, basal cells, and melanocytes. Skin cancer can affect one or all of these cells. It is important to remember that doctors consider skin cancer to be 100% curable. If skin cancer is detected early and brought to the attention of a health care provider, chances of survival are greatly increased.

### Types of Skin Cancer

**Non-Melanoma** (Basal cell carcinoma and Squamous cell carcinoma). Basal cell carcinoma, the most common type of skin cancer, is localized, slow growing and highly curable. Squamous cell carcinoma, the next most common type of skin cancer, usually remains localized for some time, but a small percentage can metastasize or spread to other areas of the body.

**Melanoma** Melanoma affects the melanocytes in the epidermis. It is the most serious type of skin cancer and accounts for approximately 77% of all skin cancer deaths. Melanoma also accounts for 4-5% of all skin cancers and is known to spread to the body's lymph nodes.

### What are Some Skin Cancer Risk Factors?

Skin cancer can affect anyone. However, certain characteristics that increase one's risk include:

- Pale skin, light colored eyes
- Blonde, red, or light brown hair
- Previous history of skin cancer
- Family history of skin cancer
- Use of certain medications (e.g., antibiotics; birth control pills)

### How can Skin Cancer be Prevented?

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends the following tips to decrease one's risk of getting skin cancer.

- 1 Stay in the shade** Especially between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Do not be fooled by cloudy skies; harmful rays pass through clouds.
- 2 Use sunscreen products** Remember to buy products with a 15 – 30 SPF factor. Also, choose broad spectrum products, which protect against both UVA and UVB rays.
- 3 Wear a hat** A hat with a wide brim all the way around is much better than a baseball cap, as it protects the ears and neck.
- 4 Wear sunglasses** Only buy sunglasses that block 99 – 100% of the sun's rays.
- 5 Cover up** When possible, wear clothing that covers most skin. The more skin that is covered, the smaller the chances are of damaging the skin.
- 6 Avoid artificial tanning** Even though tanning beds only give off UVA radiation, these rays can be harmful to the skin.
- 7 Check skin** Perform a monthly self-exam.

### Self-Examinations

A self-exam should be performed every month. To perform a self-exam, a full-length mirror and a hand held mirror are needed. There are four simple rules, known as the **ABCD** rules, for locating cancerous growths. The rules are:

**A for asymmetry** When one half of a mole doesn't match the other half

**B for border irregularity** When the edges of a mole are jagged, notched, or blurred

**C for color** When the pigmentation of a mole is not uniform, with variable degrees of tan, brown, black, and pink

**D for diameter** When the mole is greater than a quarter inch in size

If any of the **ABCD** symptoms are detected, consult a health care provider immediately.

### How is Skin Cancer Treated?

Skin cancer is diagnosed with the use of a biopsy and in many cases will result in the complete removal of the growth. When this is not the case, there are several options available for the removal of a cancerous growth. These include:

**Curettage and Electrodesiccation** Complete removal of the tumor followed by electro waves to kill any remaining cancer.

**Mohs' Surgery** Employed mainly when the depth of the tumor is not known. Involves the removal of thin layers of skin until all cancer has been removed.