

Increased awareness about skin cancer needed for minorities

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More awareness about skin cancer is needed for minorities because they believe they are at low risk of developing it, says Henry Ford Hospital dermatologist Diane Jackson-Richards, M.D.

Research has shown that [minorities](#) are diagnosed at a more advanced stage of skin cancer and have lower chances of survival than Caucasians. Squamous cell carcinoma is the most common skin cancer among African Americans and Asian Indians, and the second most common skin cancer in Hispanics, East Asians and Caucasians, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.

"We need to intensify our awareness efforts for minorities so they fully understand the dangers of sun exposure and what they can do to reduce their risk of skin cancer," says Jackson-Richards, director of Henry Ford's Multicultural Dermatology Clinic in Detroit.

"Our minority populations have this perception that they are at low risk and little can be done to prevent it. The reality is that skin cancer is a significant health concern for minorities. With early detection and treatment, though, skin cancer is highly curable."

Dr. Jackson-Richards will discuss these issues Monday during a presentation of "Skin of Color" at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology in Denver.

Dr. Jackson-Richards says "we must educate African Americans, Hispanics and other minorities that prevention guidelines are effective at reducing their risk of skin cancer." In Hispanic communities, fewer sunscreen products are available than in non-Hispanic communities, she says.

Facts:

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, the Foundation says, and more

new cases are diagnosed each year than the combined incidence of breast, prostate, lung and colon cancers.

Common risk factors for skin cancer include a personal or family history, 50 or more moles, history of excessive sun exposure, diseases that suppress the immune system and a past history of skin cancer.

People can reduce their risk of developing [skin cancer](#) by:

- Avoiding [sun exposure](#) between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher generously. Re-apply every 2 hours.
- Wear protective clothing – long-sleeved shirt and pants, wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Avoiding tanning beds and tanning.
- Seeing your physician for a skin exam every year.
- Water, snow and sand increase your cancer of sunburn.

Provided by Henry Ford Health System

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