



EMBARGOED UNTIL: 5:00a.m. EDT, June 6, 2005

Skin Cancer Fact Sheet

A new national survey¹ highlights people's growing awareness of the dangers of overexposure to the sun, and their failure to take protective action.

- A vast majority of adults say they know the dangers of overexposure to the sun (85 percent) and believe skin cancer is a serious issue (91 percent).
- The use of sunscreen went down by 12 percentage points² over the past year—from 72 percent to 60 percent—with one in seven adults (14 percent) indicating that they do nothing to protect themselves in the sun. When asked why, one in three adults (35 percent) claim they simply forget.
- Only 11 percent of adults say that they follow all the recommended sun safety guidelines whenever they go outdoors.
- Four out of five adults (86 percent) believe that a suntan is not a sign of good health. However, half of those surveyed still believe that a suntan makes a person look more attractive.
- Six in 10 adults say they know someone who has or had skin cancer.
- Only 26 percent of adults are aware that one person dies every hour of skin cancer.
- 43 percent of adults are unfamiliar with the UV Index.

Skin cancer rates are rising.

- New incidences of skin cancer, the fastest growing cancer in the United States, are now estimated to exceed 1.3 million cases this year.³ This represents two new cases diagnosed every minute and one person dying from skin cancer every hour.⁴
- More cases of skin cancer are diagnosed each year than breast, prostate, lung and colon cancer combined.⁵
- One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.⁶
- Skin cancer is a disease that increasingly strikes people at a younger age, especially in their 20s and 30s.⁷

Children are especially susceptible to the damaging rays of the sun.

- One serious (blistering) sunburn in childhood can double the risk of skin cancer.⁸
- Children average three times more exposure to the sun's rays than adults.⁹
- The vast majority of total lifetime sun exposure, perhaps as much as 80 percent, occurs by age 18.¹⁰
- Use of sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher during the first 18 years of life can reduce some types of skin cancer by nearly 78 percent.¹¹

¹ Harris Interactive Survey, conducted by telephone May 6-9, 2005, 1,000 U.S. adults.

² Harris Interactive Survey, conducted by telephone May 14-17, 2004, 1,025 U.S. adults.

³ American Cancer Society, 2005.

⁴ American Academy of Dermatology, <http://www.skincarephysicians.com/skincancernet/whatis.html>, accessed 5/11/05.

⁵ The Skin Cancer Foundation, <http://www.skincancer.org/skincancer-facts.php>, accessed 5/11/05.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Alberta Cancer Board, 2002.

⁹ Michael P. Heffernan, M.D., assistant professor of medicine (dermatology) at Washington University in St. Louis, tells WebMD; http://my.webmd.com/content/article/23/1728_57150.htm.

¹⁰ American Cancer Society, Skin Cancer Fact Sheet, 1996.