

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

## GEORGIA

**Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.**<sup>1-4</sup> This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for Georgia and the United States as a whole.

### just the facts: *Skin Cancer in Georgia*

- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 39.2% of white adults in Georgia had at least one sunburn in the past year.<sup>5</sup> Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.<sup>6-8</sup>
- **New Cases of Melanoma.** The rate of new melanoma diagnoses—responsible for 75% of all skin cancer deaths—was 13% higher in Georgia than the national average from 2002-2006.<sup>9,10</sup> An estimated 2,040 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.<sup>2</sup>
  - Among whites—who are at the highest risk for melanoma—Georgia had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the U.S. from 2002-2006.<sup>9</sup>
  - White County has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate of melanoma diagnoses among counties nationwide—158% above the national average from 2002-2006.<sup>11</sup>
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 193 people in Georgia die of melanoma every year. The melanoma death rate has increased about 1% per year among white residents over the age of 50 since 1975.<sup>12</sup>
  - Among white females, Georgia has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest annual melanoma death rate—10% above the national average for white females from 2002-2006.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1-42</sup> All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: [www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html)

### survivor story: *Kay Hendricks*



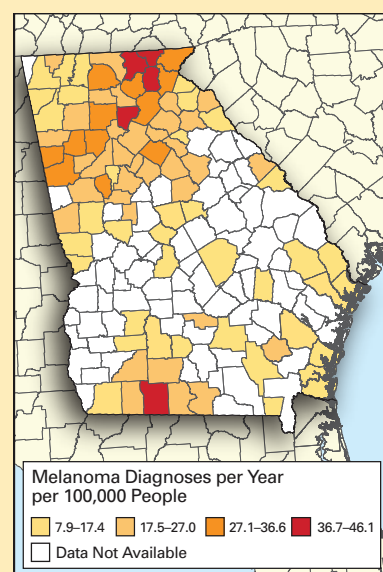
In May 1999 I went to see my dermatologist about my complexion. Because it was National Skin Cancer Month, my doctor was offering free skin cancer screenings, and I opted for a complete body scan. My doctor immediately saw the malignant mole on my back and performed a biopsy that day. I had never even seen the spot, so I was shocked to get the news that I had late Stage II melanoma.

My diagnosis scared me—both for my own life and for my children. Luckily, I only had to undergo one surgery to remove a huge plug out of my back. I've been cancer-free now for 11 years. While I will never know exactly what caused my cancer, there is a history of melanoma in my family—both my father and one cousin have been diagnosed. I also sunburned often as a teenager and was no stranger to the tanning bed.

Ever since my diagnosis, I cover up whenever I'm out in the sun. I also try to educate anyone that will listen about preventing skin cancer—including schools, clubs, and businesses—and participate in events and fundraisers to spread the word. Take it from me: know your own skin, visit the doctor regularly, and stay covered up when out in the sun!

*Kay Hendricks, a resident of Johns Creek, Georgia, was 38 years old when she was diagnosed with melanoma.*

**Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006<sup>9</sup>**  
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



**Melanoma Death Rates, 2002–2006<sup>12</sup>**  
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



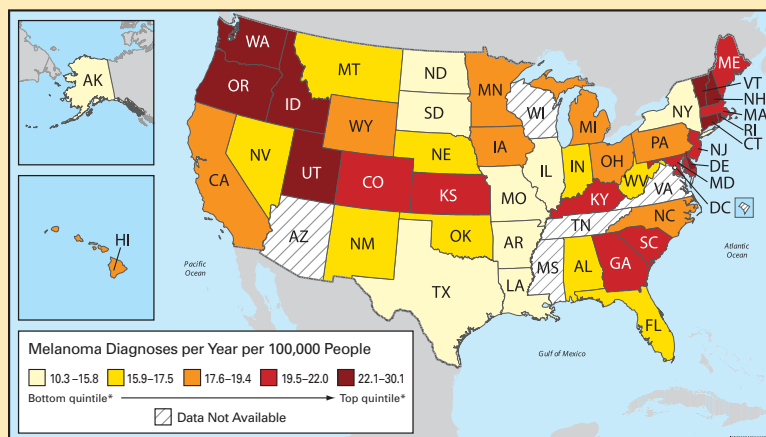
## *The Cost of Skin Cancer*

*In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost \$2 billion annually.<sup>14-15</sup>*

## statistics: *Cause for Concern*

- **In 2009, more than 1 million people were diagnosed with skin cancer, making it the most common of all cancers.**<sup>1-4</sup> More people were diagnosed with skin cancer in 2009 than with breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined.<sup>2</sup> About **1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime.**<sup>16</sup>
- **One American dies of melanoma almost every hour.**<sup>2</sup>
- **Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults (15-29 years old).**<sup>17</sup>
- **For people born in 2006, 1 in 53 will be diagnosed with melanoma**<sup>18</sup>**—nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.**<sup>19</sup>

**National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006<sup>13</sup>**  
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages, Age-adjusted Rates



\* Please note that delays in reporting melanoma cases to cancer registries are more common since they are usually diagnosed and treated in non-hospital settings such as physician offices. States are grouped into quintiles based on rates of melanoma diagnoses. A quintile is a statistical "block" representing 20% of a total. Because data are available for only 45 states, each quintile includes nine states. For example, the nine states with the highest melanoma rates—22.1 to 30.1 diagnoses per 100,000 residents every year—are in the top quintile.

what works:  
*An Ounce of Prevention*

- **Unprotected exposure to ultraviolet light—a known human carcinogen—is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer.**<sup>6,16,20-24</sup> Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one's risk.<sup>2,4,25,26</sup>
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one's life.**<sup>27-33</sup> Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.<sup>2, 34-38</sup>
- The CDC found evidence that **education and policy approaches in primary schools (for children) and in recreational or tourism settings (for adults) can improve sun safety behaviors.**<sup>39-40</sup>
- Student self-reported data<sup>41</sup>—collected as part of the U.S. EPA's SunWise Program—showed that **teachers using the SunWise Tool Kit for 1-2 hours yearly can spur increases in students' sun safety knowledge and attitudes and small to modest improvements in short-term sun safety behaviors.**<sup>42</sup>
- Using the data mentioned above, published modeling results show SunWise teaching between 1999 and 2015 could prevent more than 50 premature deaths and 11,000 future cases of skin cancer, saving the country more than \$30 million in medical costs and productivity losses.<sup>42</sup>

## skin cancer prevention: *Action Steps*

- **Do Not Burn.** Overexposure to the sun is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer.
- **Avoid Sun Tanning and Tanning Beds.** UV light from tanning beds and the sun causes skin cancer and wrinkling.
- **Use Sunscreen.** Generously apply a broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Reapply at least every two hours, and after swimming or sweating.
- **Cover Up.** Wear protective clothing, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses with 99-100% UVA/UVB protection, when possible.
- **Seek Shade.** Seek shade when the sun's UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- **Watch for the UV Index.** Pay attention to the UV Index when planning outdoor activities to prevent overexposure to the sun.

<sup>1-42</sup> All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: [www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html)