

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

## MINNESOTA

**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 Minnesota and the United States as a whole.

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

- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 48.7% of white adults in Minnesota had at least one sunburn in the past year—an increase from 40% in 1999.<sup>5</sup> Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.<sup>6-8</sup>
- **New Cases of Melanoma.** An average of 1,054 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma each year from 2003–2007.<sup>9</sup> Melanoma is responsible for about 75% of all skin cancer deaths.<sup>2,10</sup>
  - The rate of new melanoma diagnoses is rising faster than that of any other cancer type in Minnesota. The rate of new melanoma diagnoses rose on average by more than 7% per year between 2003 and 2007.<sup>9</sup>
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 120 people in Minnesota die of melanoma every year.<sup>11</sup>
  - Since 1975, the melanoma death rate has risen by an average of about 1.2% per year among state residents age 50 and over.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1-40</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: *Jennifer Wunderlich*



I saw my doctor about an abnormal mole after a friend grew concerned. The mole was removed but lost before being tested. My doctor said I was fine, even when the mole came back and began to itch and bleed. Two years passed. While pregnant with my first child, I showed the changing spot to a dermatologist I worked for; she sent me for a biopsy that week. I was shocked and scared to learn I had melanoma.

Further testing was postponed since I was pregnant, but after my child was born, tests showed the cancer had spread. After a full right groin lymphectomy and year-long follow up care, I'm still cancer-free almost 9 years later!

Growing up, I spent a lot of time outdoors in the sun and went to tanning beds a few times in my twenties. Since my diagnosis, I apply sunscreen prior to going outside and seek shade when I can. I tell my family, especially my kids, about the importance of sun safety, and encourage everyone to seek out a dermatologist for any skin concerns.

*Jennifer Wunderlich, a Lakeville, MN resident, was 32 years old when diagnosed with Stage III melanoma.*

#### Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2003–2007<sup>9</sup> All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



#### Melanoma Death Rates, 2003–2007<sup>11</sup> All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



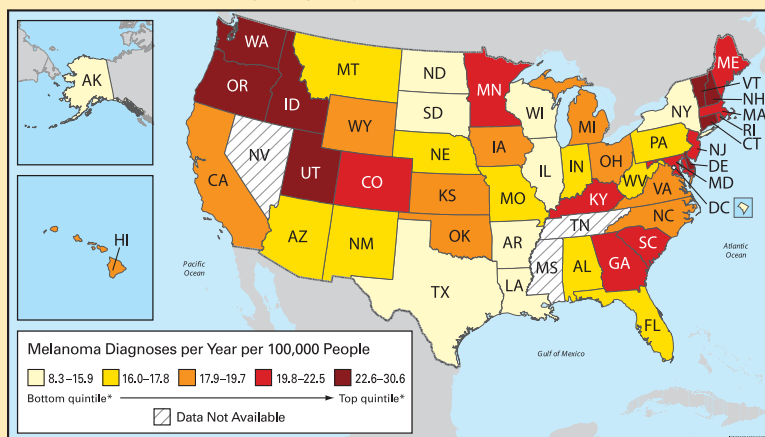
## The Cost of Skin Cancer

*In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost \$2 billion annually.<sup>12-13</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>14</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>15</sup>
- **For people born in 2009, 1 in 58 will be diagnosed with invasive melanoma<sup>16</sup>—more than 25 times the rate for people born in 1935.**<sup>17</sup>

**National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2003–2007<sup>9</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 setting 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 47 states and D.C., four quintiles include ten states, and one quintile includes eight. For example, the eight states with the highest melanoma rates—22.6 to 30.6 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>6,14,18-22</sup> Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one’s risk.<sup>2-4,23,24</sup>
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one’s life.**<sup>25-31</sup> Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.<sup>2, 32-36</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>37-38</sup>
- Student self-reported data<sup>39</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>40</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>40</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>1-40</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)