

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

## OREGON

**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 Oregon and the United States as a whole.

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

- **Sunburns on the Rise.** A 2004 survey found that 43.6% of white adults in Oregon 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 36% higher in Oregon than the national average from 2002-2006 and was the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the U.S.<sup>9,10</sup> An estimated 1,220 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.<sup>2</sup>
  - Douglas County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state and ranks among the highest 2% of counties nationwide.<sup>9</sup>
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 120 people in Oregon die of melanoma every year.<sup>11</sup> Oregon had the 8<sup>th</sup> highest melanoma death rate nationally from 2002-2006—17% higher than the U.S. average.<sup>12</sup>
  - Josephine County has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest melanoma death rate among counties nationwide, 107% higher than the national average.<sup>12</sup>

1-41 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: *Donald Hunt*



As an outdoors enthusiast, I've spent a lot of time outside. I've hiked from Mexico to Canada and biked cross-country, using just a baseball cap as my sun protection. I have red hair and fair skin, so I sunburn easily. In 2005, the sun caught up with me as a small red dot on my jaw.

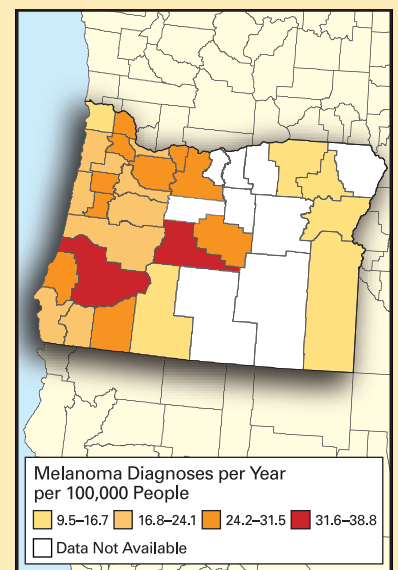
I finally went to the doctor when the spot started to mushroom out. The biopsy showed that the spot was melanoma and had spread to my lymph nodes. I was shocked! I didn't even know skin cancer could be inside your body; I thought it could just be removed superficially.

After an initial excision, I had surgery in 2006 to remove tissue from my jaw, parotid gland, and 100 lymph nodes. When the melanoma recurred a year later, I had more surgery and intensive radiation treatment, which to this day has left one side of my face numb. My final treatment—gamma knife radiation—worked: my cancer has been in remission since January 2008.

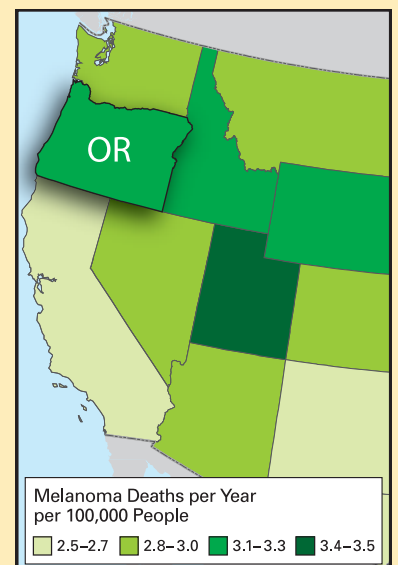
Before my battle with melanoma, I thought things like skin cancer could only happen to somebody else, not to me. I've since learned that we all can be that "somebody else." Today, I always wear a large hat to protect my skin. Take it from me: see a dermatologist immediately if you notice any unusual skin changes, because finding it early can save your life!

*Donald Hunt, a Newport, Oregon resident, was 56 years old when he was diagnosed with Stage III melanoma.*

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



#### Melanoma Death Rates, 2002–2006<sup>11</sup> All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



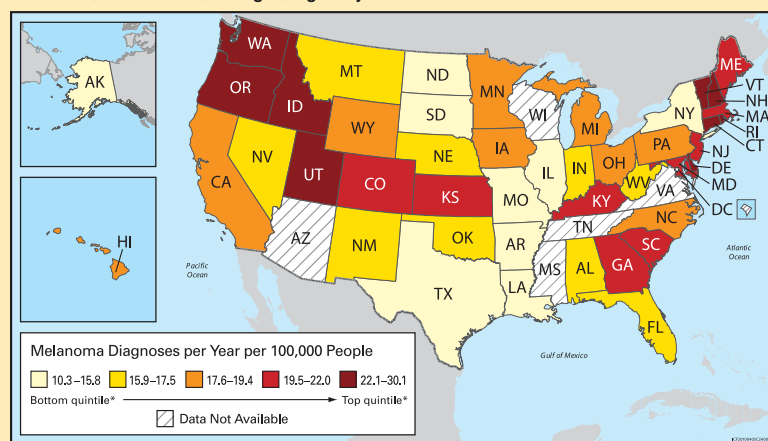
## The Cost of Skin Cancer

*In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost \$2 billion annually.<sup>13-14</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>15</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>16</sup>
- **For people born in 2006, 1 in 53 will be diagnosed with melanoma<sup>12</sup>— nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.**<sup>17</sup>

**National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006<sup>18</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>6,15,19-23</sup> Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one’s risk.<sup>2-4,24,25</sup>
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one’s life.**<sup>26-32</sup> Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.<sup>2,33-37</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>38-39</sup>
- Student self-reported data<sup>40</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>41</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>41</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.

1–41 All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: [www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html)