facts about: Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.¹⁻⁴ This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for Pennsylvania and the United States as a whole.

just the facts: Skin Cancer in Pennsylvania

- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 42.7% of white adults in Pennsylvania had at least one sunburn in the past year.⁵ Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.⁶⁻⁸

- **New Cases of Melanoma.** An estimated 3,440 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.² Melanoma is responsible for about 75% of all skin cancer deaths.²,⁹
  - The rate of new melanoma diagnoses is about 41% higher among men than women in Pennsylvania.¹⁰
  - Montour County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state—higher than 96% of counties nationwide.¹⁰

- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 426 people in Pennsylvania die of melanoma every year. From 1975–2007, the melanoma death rate more than doubled among residents over the age of 50.¹¹
  - The rate of melanoma deaths among men is more than double the rate among women in Pennsylvania.¹¹
  - Monroe County has the highest melanoma death rate in Pennsylvania—59% higher than the national average.¹¹

¹⁻⁴⁰ All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

survivor story: Richard Beston

I thought nothing of the small bump on my shoulder until my doctor got worried during an unrelated visit. He sent me for a biopsy that day. The diagnosis was shocking: Stage IV melanoma. My wife, Ann, was pregnant with our second child, and our first was only 11 months. It was devastating.

I underwent a clinical trial, chemotherapy, immune-boosting shots and three surgeries—removing parts of one lung and an entire lobe of the other. Five years later, I had a non-melanoma skin cancer removed in another surgery. My oncologist calls me a miracle; I've been cancer-free eight years!

As a child and adult, I got blistering sunburns all too often, once so severe I needed medical care! I didn't know my fair skin and family history of melanoma put me at risk. I limit sun exposure as best I can now and keep sunscreen on hand for the times I can't. I spend time with melanoma patients trying to give them hope. And I'm always reminding people: when in doubt, get it checked out!

Richard Beston, a resident of Paoli, PA, works to advance melanoma research.
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.