

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

# SOUTH CAROLINA

**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 South Carolina and the United States as a whole.

## just the facts: *Skin Cancer in South Carolina*

- **Sunburns on the Rise.** A 2004 survey found that 41.6% of white adults in South Carolina had at least one sunburn in the past year—an increase from 33% 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.** The rate of new melanoma diagnoses—responsible for 75% of all skin cancer deaths—was 17% higher in South Carolina than the national average from 2002-2006 and was the 12<sup>th</sup> highest in the U.S.<sup>9,10</sup> An estimated 1,090 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.<sup>2</sup>
  - Among whites—who are at the highest risk for melanoma—South Carolina had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the U.S. from 2002-2006.<sup>9</sup>
  - Beaufort County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state and ranks among the highest 4% of counties nationwide.<sup>9</sup>
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 110 people in South Carolina die of melanoma every year.<sup>11</sup> The melanoma death rate has increased about 1% per year among state residents over the age of 50 since 1975.<sup>11</sup>
  - York County has the highest melanoma death rate in the state, 37% higher than the national average.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1-41</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: *Sally Hogg*



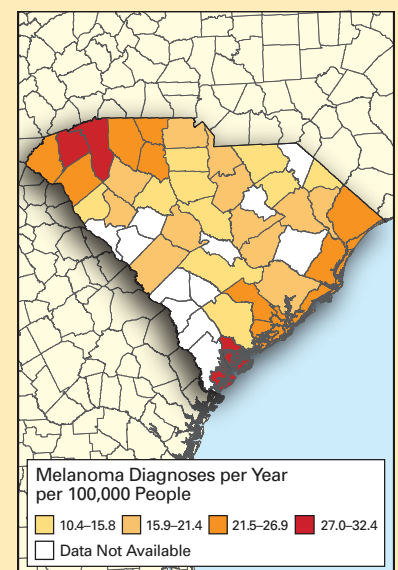
In the summer of 2004, I received the shocking news that I had Stage III melanoma. I couldn't believe it; I felt numb. The melanoma had spread from a spot on my upper right arm to the lymph nodes on the underside of my arm. There was also a three inch tumor in my right breast. I underwent a radical mastectomy to remove my entire breast and the lymph nodes, and also had the spot on my arm surgically excised. I have been cancer-free now for over five years.

Growing up I spent a lot of time in tanning beds and outside in the sun. But since my diagnosis, I've been careful to limit my time in the sun, especially in the summer. When I do spend more time outdoors, I make sure I'm well covered with a hat and long sleeves.

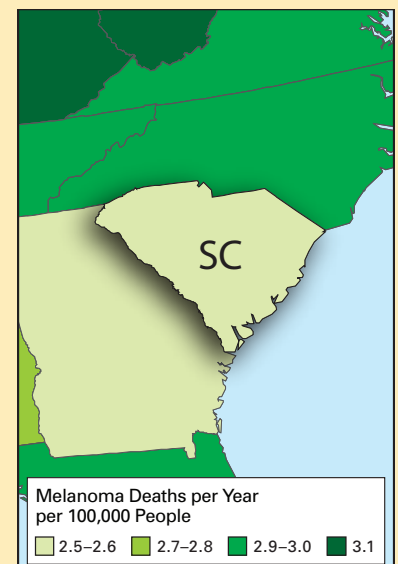
I also visit my oncologist regularly for check-ups. I'm always afraid "it" will be back, but am so thankful to be reaching my five year mark. Melanoma is treatable if it's caught early enough, so I encourage my friends and family to see a doctor if they discover any odd skin changes, and I constantly remind people of the dangers of tanning beds and overexposure to the sun.

*Sally Hogg, a Manning, South Carolina resident, was 60 years old when she 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



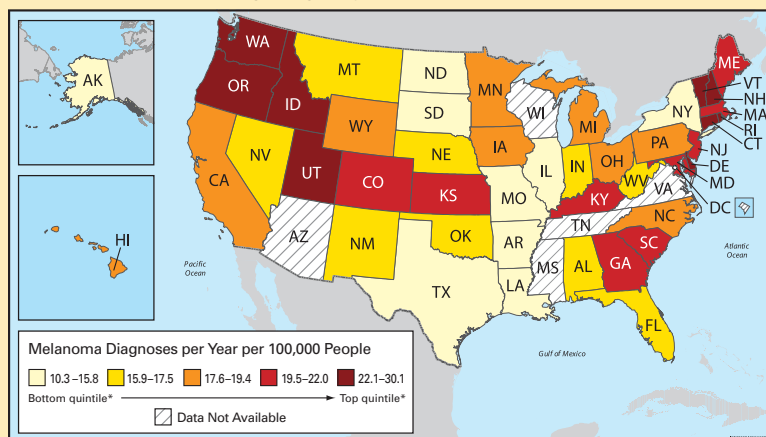
## The Cost of Skin Cancer

*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>17</sup>—nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.<sup>18</sup>

**National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006<sup>12</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)