

## SKIN CANCER

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, claiming the lives of 9,800 people in 2003.
- An estimated 55,100 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed in 2004. Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer, causing more than 75% of all skin cancer deaths. More than 1 million cases of basal and squamous cell cancers are expected to be diagnosed in 2004.
- Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays appears to be the most important environmental factor in the development of skin cancer, which is largely preventable when sun-protective practices are used consistently.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

With funds from CDC's Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion appropriations, CDC's skin cancer prevention and education efforts are designed to reduce illness and death. In 2002, CDC published the "Guidelines for School Programs to Prevent Skin Cancer" to help state and local education agencies and schools play a role in reducing unsafe sun exposure. Recommendations include establishing policies to reduce sun exposure, providing an environment that supports sun-safety practices, providing health education, involving students' families, training healthcare professionals, and evaluating school skin cancer prevention programs. CDC released the *EXCITE Skin Cancer Module*, which can be used by high school students and teachers to learn more about skin cancer and epidemiology.

During 2003, the Task Force on Community Preventive Services— an independent panel supported by CDC—conducted a systematic review of selected population-based interventions to prevent melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer. The review was published in CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. The research results from the Task Force included recommendations (for educational and policy approaches in primary schools and in recreational and tourism settings) to encourage people to wear hats or other garments that limit sun exposure.

#### *Example of Program in Action*

CDC provides funding to Colorado, Michigan, and North Carolina state education agencies to collaborate with their department of public health to conduct demonstration projects implementing the "Guidelines for School Programs to Prevent Skin Cancer." CDC also continues to fund several state departments of health to implement skin cancer prevention and education efforts that were identified and prioritized in the comprehensive cancer control plans.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC plans to increase support for comprehensive cancer control in health agencies to integrate the full range of cancer control activities to better maximize resources, improve community-based education and health promotion, share expertise, and effectively target at-risk populations. In addition, CDC will work to further disseminate the "Guidelines for School Programs to Prevent Skin Cancer" among key partners.