

# POWER OF PREVENTION

## The Health and Economic Benefits of Preventing Chronic Diseases



## SKIN CANCER

Each year in the United States, nearly 5 million people are treated for [skin cancer](#),<sup>1</sup> and the number of new cases continues to grow.<sup>2,3</sup>

The most common types of skin cancer—basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma—are usually treatable,<sup>4</sup> but treatment is expensive and can leave scars.<sup>1,5</sup> Melanoma is the third most common type of skin cancer and is much more deadly.<sup>2,4</sup>

### Skin Cancer in the United States

Most skin cancers are caused by overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun and indoor tanning devices.<sup>4</sup>

- Every year, more than 83,000 people are diagnosed with melanoma, and about 8,000 die of it.<sup>2</sup>
- Over one-half of high school students<sup>6</sup> and about one-third of adults<sup>7</sup> get sunburned at least once each year.
- Indoor tanning has declined in recent years, but about 900,000 high school students<sup>8</sup> and 7.8 million adults<sup>9</sup> continue to engage in this activity.
- Non-Hispanic White people and people with sun-sensitive skin have the highest percentage of sunburn and indoor tanning<sup>6,7</sup> and the highest rates of new skin cancer cases.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Strategies That Work

CDC is working to prevent cancer, detect it early, improve the health of people with cancer, and reduce health care costs associated with cancer. The best way to reduce skin cancer risk is for people to make sun safety an everyday

### The Benefits of Using Proven Strategies

Using proven skin cancer prevention programs could:

-  **INCREASE** use of sun protection, such as seeking shade; wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and long-sleeved shirt; and using broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15.<sup>4,10</sup>
-  **PREVENT** sunburns and premature skin aging and lower the risk of skin cancer by reducing unnecessary sun exposure and sun damage.<sup>4,10</sup>
-  **REDUCE** harms from the use of indoor tanning devices, including skin burns, eye damage, and increased risk of skin cancer.<sup>4</sup>
-  **SAVE** an estimated \$250 million\* a year in health care costs by preventing an estimated 21,000 cases of melanoma by 2030.<sup>11</sup>



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National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

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habit and avoid indoor tanning and sun tanning.<sup>4</sup> But outdoor environments and community policies are often not designed with sun safety in mind. Communities and decision makers can help put proven skin cancer prevention programs into action.<sup>4</sup> For example, they can:

- Increase shade at playgrounds, public pools, and other public spaces.
- Promote sun protection in recreation areas, including selling hats, sunscreen, and sunglasses.
- Encourage employers, child care centers, schools, and colleges to teach employees and students about sun safety and skin protection.
- Restrict the availability and use of indoor tanning by minors.
- Promote electronic reporting of skin cancers and encourage health care systems and providers to use these systems.

**CDC leads skin cancer prevention efforts by:**

- Using national surveillance data to monitor trends in melanoma cases and deaths and skin cancer risk factors.
- Conducting research to develop and test prevention messages.
- Examining the policy, health system, and environmental factors that influence skin cancer risk behaviors.
- Making sure partners and the public have accurate and timely information about skin cancer prevention and resources to help them put the science of skin cancer prevention into action in their communities.



CDC's [National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program](#) helps programs across the country use proven strategies to improve sun safety as part of their efforts to prevent and control cancer.<sup>12</sup>



**\$8.1 BILLION<sup>‡(a)</sup>**  
total annual medical cost  
of treating all skin cancer types<sup>1</sup>

**The High Cost of Skin Cancer**

- The annual cost for treating melanoma has grown faster than the costs for all cancers combined.<sup>1</sup>
- The annual cost of treating new patients with melanoma is projected to triple from \$457 million in 2011 to \$1.6 billion\* by 2030.<sup>11</sup>
- An estimated 33,826 emergency department visits for sunburn are reported each year,<sup>13</sup> for a total estimated cost of \$11.2 million.<sup>‡(b)</sup>
- Prohibiting the use of indoor tanning among minors younger than 18 years could prevent an estimated 61,839 melanoma cases and 6,735 melanoma deaths over the lifetime of young people currently aged 14 or younger in the United States.<sup>14</sup> These reductions could save more than \$342 million<sup>‡(c)</sup> in treatment costs.

\* Cost estimates were adjusted to the projected increase in health expenditures from 2011 through 2030.

<sup>‡</sup> Costs were measured in <sup>a</sup>2011 US dollars, <sup>b</sup>2013 US dollars, and <sup>c</sup>2014 US dollars. Older cost estimates are likely to be underestimates.