What You Should Know About SKIN CANCER

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, generally defined as the abnormal growth of skin cells that are damaged by the sun. The three main types are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma.

RISK FACTORS

**ULTRASUNLIT (UV) LIGHT EXPOSURE**

The sun’s rays can cause skin damage, which is why skin cancers are more than twice as common in Caucasians than African-Americans. The effects of sun exposure may not appear until years or even decades later.

- **FAMILY HISTORY**
  - People with a family history of skin cancer are at an increased risk for developing skin cancer.

- **GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**
  - People who live in areas where the sun is bright year-round or those who spend a lot of time outdoors without protective clothing or sunscreen are at greater risk.

- **FAIR SKIN, FRECKLES**
  - People with fair skin, rosy cheeks, and freckles are at greater risk.

- **BLUE OR GREEN EYES**
  - People with blue or green eyes are at greater risk.

- **WHITE HAIR**
  - People with white or gray hair are at greater risk.

- **ANAEROBIC SPORE FORMING BACTERIA**
  - People who are exposed to certain types of bacteria, such as those found in water, are at greater risk.

- **IMMUNE SYSTEM WEAKNESS**
  - People with weakened immune systems, such as those with HIV/AIDS, are at greater risk.

- **IMMEDIATE FAMILY HISTORY**
  - People whose immediate family history includes skin cancer are at greater risk.

PREVENTION

- **SEEK SHADE**
  - Especially during peak sunlight hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

- **AVOID SUNBURN**
  - People and animals, even pets, can burn.

- **USE A PROTECTIVE SUNSCREEN**
  - Sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes before sun exposure.

- **WEAR SUNCREEN**
  - Use SPF 15 or higher on exposed skin.

- **WEAR A HAT AND SUNGLASSES**
  - Protect the exposed skin and eyes.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- **SURGERY**
  - This is the most common treatment for skin cancer.

- **RADIATION THERAPY**
  - This treatment uses targeted energy (examples: X-rays, radioactive substances) to destroy cancer cells, shrink tumors and/or alleviate certain cancer-related symptoms.

- **IMMUNOTHERAPY**
  - This treatment prompts a person’s immune system to attack cancer cells or by providing the immune system with powerful immune system proteins. Antibodies can be useful in treating cancer because they can be designed to attack a very specific part of a cancer cell.

- **CHEMOTHERAPY**
  - This treatment uses targeted energy (examples: cancer-fighting medications) to attack cancer cells.