SKIN: YOUR LARGEST ORGAN

The skin is the largest organ in the human body. It forms a waterproof, protective wrap over your entire body, serving as a barrier to infection and helping to control your body temperature.

SKIN FACTS

- The average adult human has a skin surface area between 16.1 and 21.5 square feet.
- In just a square inch of skin, there are approximately:
  - 60,000 melanocytes, which give skin its color
  - 1,000 nerve endings
  - 650 sweat glands
  - 20 blood vessels

WHAT IS SKIN CANCER?

Skin cancer is the out-of-control growth of abnormal cells in the epidermis, the outermost skin layer, caused by unrepaired DNA damage that triggers mutations. These mutations lead the skin cells to multiply rapidly and form malignant tumors.

The two main causes of skin cancer are the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays and the use of UV indoor tanning beds. The good news is that if skin cancer is caught early, your dermatologist can treat it with little or no scarring and high odds of eliminating it entirely. Often, the doctor may even detect the growth at a precancerous stage, before it has become a full-blown skin cancer or penetrated below the surface of the skin.

THE ABCDEs of Melanoma

A is for Asymmetry
Most melanomas are asymmetrical: a line through the middle would not create matching halves. Common moles are usually round and symmetrical.

B is for Border
Melanoma borders tend to be uneven and may have scalloped or notched edges. Common moles tend to have smoother, more even borders.

C is for Color
Multiple colors are a warning sign. While benign moles are usually a single shade of brown, a melanoma may have different shades of brown, tan, and black. As it grows, the colors red, white or blue may also appear.

D is for Diameter or Dark
It is a warning sign if a lesion is at least 6 mm, or ½ inch, in diameter or larger. It is also important to look for any lesion, no matter what size, that is darker than others.

E is for Evolving
Any change in size, shape, color or elevation of a spot on your skin, or any new symptom in it, such as bleeding, itching or scaliness is a warning sign to see your doctor.

ONE IN FIVE AMERICANS will develop skin cancer by the age of 70. Knowledge is your greatest weapon in fighting it. This primer gives you an overview of the major types of skin cancer and the precancers that can develop into skin cancer if left untreated. Let us help!

SkinCancer.org

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