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facts about: *Skin Cancer*

EPA CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention IDPH Iowa Department of Public Health

IOWA

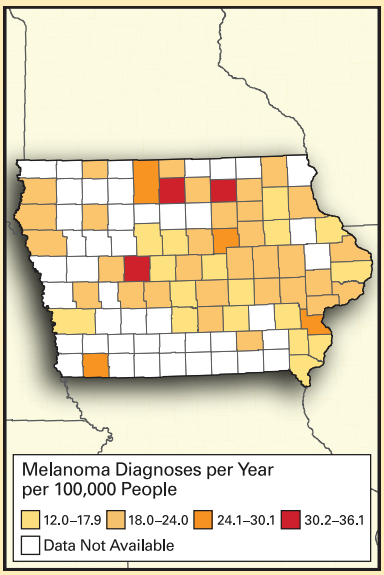
Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.[1-4] This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for Iowa and the United States as a whole.

just the facts: *Skin Cancer in Iowa*

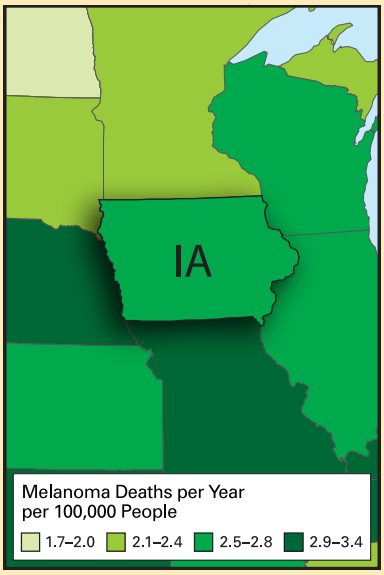
- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 43.6% of white adults in Iowa had at least one sunburn in the past year.[5] Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.[6-8]
- **New Cases of Melanoma.** An estimated 910 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.[2] Melanoma is responsible for about 75% of all skin cancer deaths.[9,10]
  - Between 1975–2006, the rate of new melanoma diagnoses in Iowa has more than tripled.[9]
  - Hancock County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state, higher than 98% of counties nationwide.[9]
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 82 people in Iowa die of melanoma every year. For each year between 2002 and 2006, melanoma death rates in Iowa were the highest among the 10 most common cancer diagnoses in the United States.[11,12]

[1–42] All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006[9]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



Melanoma Death Rates, 2002–2006[11]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



survivor story: *Terri Kruse*

Growing up, I helped my father on our farm and sunburned frequently. Despite our family's fair skin, freckles, and red hair, we didn't know about sun exposure risks and didn't have access to sunscreen. In 1986, when I was 29 years old, I noticed an irregularly shaped, dark mole on my back that turned out to be Stage III melanoma. My father and his siblings were also diagnosed with nonmelanoma skin cancer.

About 20 years later, I noticed another skin irregularity: a small, red, wart-like bump below my collarbone. After keeping a close eye on the bump for 3 months, I was diagnosed with a very rare form of skin cancer: Stage V desmoplatic melanoma. Both cancers were surgically removed, and I underwent an experimental radiation and drug treatment for my second melanoma. I have now been cancer-free for nearly 2 years.

Today, I regularly examine my skin, visit a specialist every 3 months, and my children are screened annually by a specialist. I share my story with all who will listen and—as a school nurse—try to educate teenagers on the dangers of sunburns and tanning beds. My advice: Seek shade during the midday sun, wear sunscreen, and educate yourself on the signs of skin cancer!

Terri Kruse, a resident of Des Moines, Iowa, was diagnosed with melanoma at ages 29 and 51.

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facts about: *Skin Cancer*

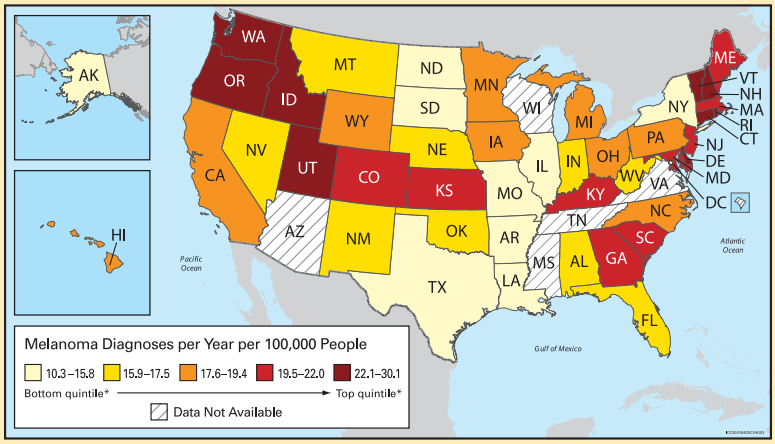
The Cost of Skin Cancer

In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost $2 billion annually.[13-14]

statistics: *Cause for Concern*

- **In 2009, more than 1 million people were diagnosed with skin cancer, making it the most common of all cancers.**[1-4] More people were diagnosed with skin cancer in 2009 than with breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined.[2] About **1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime.**[16]
- **One American dies of melanoma almost every hour.**[2]
- **Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults (15-29 years old).**[17]
- **For people born in 2009, 1 in 58 will be diagnosed with invasive melanoma**[18]**—more than 25 times the rate for people born in 1935.**[19]

National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006[15]
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.**[6,15,20-24] Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one's risk.[2-4,25,26]
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one's life.**[27-33] Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.[2, 34-38]
- 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.**[39-40]
- Student self-reported data[41]—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.**[42]
  - 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.[42]

[1–42] All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

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.