Office of Air and Radiation (6205J) EPA-430-F-10-015 May 2010

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

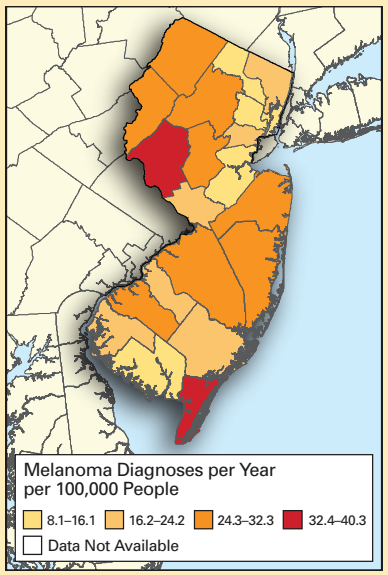
Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.[1-4] This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for New Jersey and the United States as a whole.

just the facts: *Skin Cancer in New Jersey*

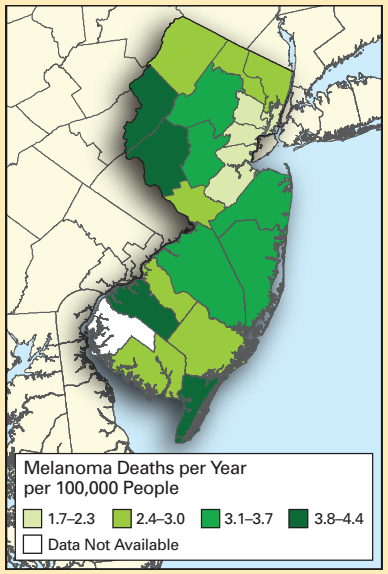
- **Sunburns on the Rise.** A 2004 survey found that 40.2% of white adults in New Jersey had at least one sunburn in the past year—an increase from 32.8% in 1999.[5] Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.[6-8]
- **New Cases of Melanoma on the Rise.** The rate of new melanoma diagnoses—responsible for 75% of skin cancer deaths—has increased by about 5% per year among New Jersey residents from the early 1990s to 2006.[9]
  - An estimated 2,530 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.[2]
  - Cape May County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state and ranks among the highest 2% of counties nationwide.[10,11]
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** Nearly 245 people in New Jersey die of melanoma every year.[12] Warren County has the highest melanoma death rate in the state, 63% higher than the national average from 2002-2006.[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[10]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



Melanoma Death Rates, 2002–2006[12]
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



survivor story: *Vinny Smith*

As a Jersey Shore native, I've spent a lot of time on the beach and the ball fields. I'm naturally fair skinned, but growing up I always had a deep tan from all those hours in the sun. I never thought about sun protection when I was a kid or even a young adult.

In 2005, my wife noticed an odd spot on my neck, so I went to the dermatologist immediately. I was diagnosed with Stage I melanoma, but luckily the cancer hadn't spread. The spot was surgically removed. Two years later during a self exam, I found two more suspicious spots, one under my left nipple and one on the top of my right foot. Both spots were melanoma in situ and were removed.

It seemed ironic to be diagnosed with melanoma since I was teaching about skin cancer prevention for the American Cancer Society. I wasn't surprised I got it, but was concerned because I knew it was serious.

Since learning about the risks of skin cancer, I've been careful to protect my skin from the sun, including wearing sunscreen and protective clothing. Remember to keep your skin protected and if you think you might be at risk, ask your doctor for a full body screening!

Vinny Smith, a resident of Middletown, NJ, is committed to teaching about skin cancer prevention and has joined several organizations to spread the message throughout the state.

Recycled/Recyclable—Printed with vegetable oil-based inks on paper that contains at least 50% post-consumer fiber.

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

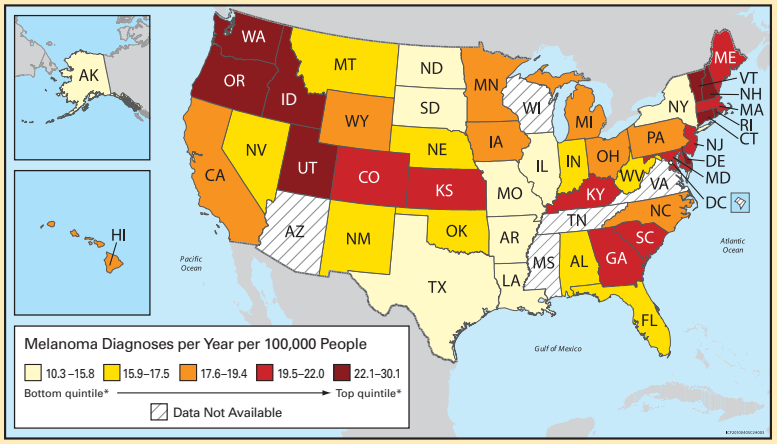
The Cost of Skin Cancer

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.**[15]
- **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).**[16]
- **For people born in 2006, 1 in 53 will be diagnosed with melanoma**[17]**—nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.**[18]

National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2002–2006[19]
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.