



January

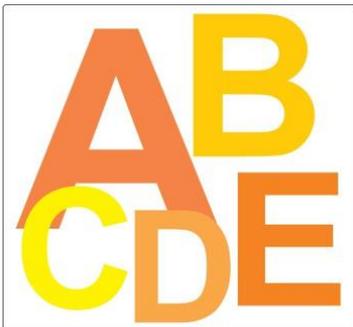
Skin Cancer Awareness (Sun-Smart)



CANSA CEO, Sue Janse Van Rensburg says, “Sunlight keeps us warm, it creates food and shelter for us via plant life and gives us light. However, as greenhouse gases trap more heat and the ozone layer allows more dangerous ultraviolet (UV) light through, the sun’s rays can be distinctly dangerous. UV rays cause skin cancer in humans and animals. So we need to be aware of the risk factors for skin cancer and be proactive to help detect skin cancers early.”

Zoning in on malignant melanoma

Malignant melanoma (sometimes referred to as only melanoma) is the most dangerous form of skin cancer and currently accounts for approximately 1% of all cancer deaths. South Africa has one of the highest incidences, if not the highest, of malignant melanoma in the world as far as Caucasians are concerned (read CANSA’s Fact Sheet on Malignant Melanoma). Melanoma is caused mainly by intense, occasional UV exposure (frequently leading to sunburn), especially in those who are genetically predisposed to the disease.



The ABCDE of malignant melanoma

Moles, brown spots and growths on the skin are usually harmless, although anyone who has more than 100 moles or atypical moles are at greater risk for melanoma. “That’s why it’s so important to get to know your skin very well and to recognise any changes in the moles on your body. Ask a loved one or friend to examine your back and the top of your head. Visit our website to find out how you can look for the ABCDE signs of melanoma and if you see one or more, make an appointment with a dermatologist or doctor immediately,” adds Janse van Rensburg (view CANSA’s Infographic on SunSmart and ABCDE).

The ABCDE signs are as follows:

- A**-symmetry – a mark with one half unlike the other (not symmetrical). Common moles are round and symmetrical
- B**order irregularities – scalloped/poorly defined edges. Common moles are smooth and have even borders
- C**olour changes – tan, black, brown, red, white, blue. Common moles are usually a single shade of brown or black
- D**iameter – mainly larger than 6mm
- E**volve – grows bigger and becomes more prominent

Other warning signs

CANSA also advises of more warning signs for malignant melanoma – a sore that doesn’t heal; new growth; spread of pigment (colour) from the border of a spot to surrounding skin; redness or a new swelling beyond the border; change in sensation – itchiness, tenderness, or pain and change in the surface of a mole – scaling, oozing, bleeding, or the appearance of a bump or nodule.

Skin cancer screening

CANSA uses mole-mapping dermoscope devices (FotoFinder) for mole mapping – this screening test is available at most CANSA Care Centres across the country. Every client with suspicious moles and skin changes is referred for an intensive skin evaluation.



Reducing the risk for all skin cancer types

- Stay out of the sun between 10am and 3pm – stay in the shade or under an umbrella as much as possible
- Always apply sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outside and reapply at least every two to three hours
- It's important to know the Sun Protection Factor (SPF) needed for your skin type. Use sunscreen with an SPF of between 20 and 50; preferably SPF 30-50 for fair to very fair skin
- The CANSA's Seal of Recognition logo appears on approved sunscreen products and is a guarantee that the manufacturers of these UV protective products have complied with the strict set of criteria developed by CANSA.
- Locally packaged CANSA approved sunscreens bear the new SunSmart Choice Seal, whilst sunscreens packaged internationally may exhibit the SunSmart Choice Seal on their point of sale and/or other promotional material only. All SunSmart seal compliant sunscreens are listed on the CANSA website – visit CANSA's Seal of Recognition – Protection Category. View CANSA's SunSmart Choice Seal advertisement – 'We've looked on the inside, you look on the outside.'
- Look out for the manufacture or expiry date as products usually expire two years after being manufactured – however, once opened, no product should be used for longer than a year
- Wear protective clothing and thickly-woven fabric hats with wide brims. Avoid caps that leave the neck and ears exposed.
- Wear sunglasses with a UV protection rating of UV400
- Avoid sunbeds and sunlamps
- Do monthly mole checks and go for regular screening



The FotoFinder screening test, spot-the-spot examinations as well as other screening tests such as cholesterol level testing, are also provided by the CANSA mobile health units that travel to remote areas throughout South Africa to reach people who would otherwise not have access to screening.

For more info visit www.cansa.org.za or contact CANSA toll-free 0800 22 66 22 or email: info@cansa.org.za. Follow CANSA on Twitter: @CANSA and join CANSA on Facebook: CANSA The Cancer Association of South Africa

Source: <http://www.cansa.org.za/will-you-be-sunsmart-all-year-round/>