

National Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month—May 1998

MAY HAS been designated National Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month by the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). In 1998, approximately 1 million new cases of basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas will be detected, and approximately 41,600 new cases of malignant melanoma will be diagnosed.¹ In addition, in 1998, an estimated 9200 persons will die from skin cancer. This month is dedicated to increasing the awareness of the importance of skin cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment.

Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays is the most important behavioral risk factor for skin cancer. Measures to prevent skin cancer include 1) reducing direct exposure to the sun, especially during midday hours (i.e., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.) when the sun's rays are the strongest; 2) wearing protective clothing (e.g., broad-

brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and sun glasses); and 3) using sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least 15 to protect against UV A and B rays.¹ Persons should also avoid artificial sources of UV light, such as tanning beds and sun lamps.²

CDC's National Skin Cancer Prevention Education Program, in collaboration with AAD, the American Cancer Society, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Weather Service, state health departments, universities, and other public and private organizations, has focused on increasing public awareness about skin cancer risk factors and appropriate sun protection behaviors. Program efforts include media campaigns and health education efforts among target groups, prevention education for nurses, evaluation of a UV index and UV index worksite demonstration project, development of school and community health guidelines for skin cancer prevention/sun protec-

tion, and formation of a national council for skin cancer prevention.

Additional information about skin cancer is available from the National Cancer Institute, telephone (800) 422-6237, and from the American Cancer Society, telephone (800) 227-2345. Information about AAD's program is available from the World-Wide Web at <http://www.aad.org>. Information about CDC's program is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dpcp/nscpep>.

MMWR. 1998;47:343.

REFERENCES

1. American Cancer Society. Cancer facts and figures, January 1998. Atlanta, Georgia: American Cancer Society, 1998.
2. Public Health Service. Healthy people 2000: national health promotion and disease prevention objectives—full report, with commentary. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, 1990; DHHS publication no. (PHS)91-50212.