



Kathleen Sebelius, Governor  
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND ENVIRONMENT

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Division of Health

## News Release

### *May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month*

Are you ready to enjoy the sunshine after the long dreary winter? Do you think you are doing all you can to protect your skin when you are out in the sun? You should think again. Most people fall short, miserably short, in reducing their risk of getting skin cancer, a new study from Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia claims. “Skin cancer rates have increased enough in the past 30 years to give it the distinction of being the most common cancer in the United States,” said Roderick Bremby, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, “People need to take more precautions while spending time in the sun.”

Skin cancer can be prevented. Using the following tips to protect your skin from the sun now could decrease your chances of developing skin cancer later in life and help prevent wrinkles.

- Limit your exposure to the sun, especially midday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Seek shady areas, and avoid direct sunlight.
- Wear protective clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat, a long-sleeved shirt, pants and sunglasses that block out ultraviolet rays. Dark, tightly woven clothes are best.
- Use a sunscreen every day, all year, even when it is cloudy. A sunscreen should block ultraviolet rays and have a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 to 30.
- Do not use a tanning bed, either at home or at a salon.
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going out into the sun and/or every 2 hours and reapply after swimming.

One in five Americans including one in three Caucasians will develop skin cancer in the course of their lifetime. Children are especially vulnerable to the sun's damaging rays and one blistering sunburn in childhood more than doubles a person's chances of developing melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer, later in life.

Skin cancer is classified in three basic types, basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma. In Kansas, it is estimated that 550 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed in 2008. Nationally, the estimate is 67,720 new cases and an estimated 11,200 deaths from the disease. Data is not collected on basal and squamous cell cancers.

More than 80 percent of all skin cancers are the most common type, basal cell. This type of cancer has tripled in U.S. women under age 40 in the last 30 years. Squamous cell skin cancer will be diagnosed in 250,000 Americans each year. Melanoma will account for more than 62,000 cases of skin cancer in 2008 and of the 11,200 skin cancer deaths each year in America, more than 8,400 will result from this type of cancer.

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As the state's environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans. Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.