



Kathleen Sebelius, Governor
Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND ENVIRONMENT

www.kdheks.gov

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May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month May 22 is 'Don't Fry Day'

In Kansas, more than 500 cases of melanoma are diagnosed each year, with nearly 100 deaths due to the disease annually. More than 1 million new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year, including over 100,000 cases of melanoma which is the most dangerous, especially among young people. One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime, and one American dies of melanoma almost every hour.

“The best way to prevent skin cancer is to protect yourself from the sun,” said Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). “When used consistently, sun-protective practices can reduce a person’s risk of developing skin cancer. An estimated 65 to 90 percent of melanomas are caused by exposure to ultraviolet light or sunlight and could be prevented if children, adolescents and adults were protected from ultraviolet radiation. This includes avoiding use of tanning beds or sunlamps.”

People with certain risk factors are more likely to develop skin cancer. Risk factors vary for different types of skin cancer, but some general risk factors are having lighter natural skin color; family or personal history of skin cancer; exposure to the sun through work and play; history of sunburns early in life; skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily or becomes painful in the sun; blue or green eyes; blond or red hair; and certain types and a large number of moles.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends several easy options for sun protection. Seek shade especially during mid-day hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. when ultraviolet (UVA and UVB) rays are strongest and do the most damage, and cover up with clothing to protect exposed skin. Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck, and wear sunglasses that wrap around and block as close to 100 percent of UV rays as possible. A sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher and both UVA and UVB protection is recommended.

The first sign of melanoma is often a change in the size, shape, or color of a mole, but it can also appear as a new mole. A simple rule of ‘ABCD’ can help you recognize the symptoms of melanoma: Asymmetry (one half is different than the other half); Border (edges are notched, uneven, or blurred); Color (uneven; shades of brown, tan, and black are present); and Diameter (greater than 6 mm). Changes in the size, color, shape or texture of a mole, the development of a

new mole, or any other unusual changes in the skin indicate the need to see a doctor or dermatologist as soon as possible.

This year, the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention has declared Friday, May 22 as Don't Fry Day, which is the start of Memorial Day weekend when many people traditionally begin summer activities involving spending longer amounts of time outdoors. This campaign seeks to advance awareness of skin cancer prevention. More information and resources about this campaign are available at www.skincancerprevention.org.

For Kansas cancer information and resources, visit www.cancerkansas.org.

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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.