

How to Check Yourself for Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is one of the most insidious types of cancer in the United States. It is the most commonly diagnosed type of cancer and is present in as many as a million Americans alone. Fortunately, it is also one of the easiest types of cancer to treat. Of the three kinds of skin cancer, only one is known to commonly result in death, and even that type (melanoma) can be treated successfully when diagnosed early. As a result, it is of utmost importance to ensure that your body is healthy and cancer-free. It is highly recommended to perform a self examination of your body at least once each month, to ensure that you can notice any problems before they develop more and possibly spread to other parts of the body, as melanoma often does.

When conducting a self test, it is best to perform it after you get out of the shower or bath. Doing so ensures that the skin is clean and smooth, so that you don't miss any aberrations that may be present. For males, it is also recommended to perform a testicular self exam once a month and combining these two important tests can be time effective. For women, checking for breast cancer once per month is of maximum importance, and consolidating the two tests is recommended.

In the preferred setting for a self-exam for skin cancer, you should have bright lighting and a full length mirror. Not a single inch should be unchecked when you conduct the test; be sure to check even the most hard-to-see areas, including the genitals, the buttocks, the top of your head and the entire length of your back. If needed, use a hand mirror so that you can reflect it into the full length mirror to eye hard-to-see spots on your body. If there is any spot that you cannot see yourself, don't ignore the idea. Find someone that you trust and have them help you to carry out the examination. Shyness should be overcome when it comes to your personal health.

When inspecting for skin cancer, note any new markings that may be present on your skin. This includes blemishes, any discoloration of the skin, bumps of any kind and moles. If you have moles already present, be sure to examine them to make certain that they have not changed in size, shape, color, or feel. Problem moles usually are asymmetrical, and can have ragged edges and different colors than the other moles present on your body. If you have moles or lesions that don't seem to heal, it is vital to note them as well.

If you happen to find any changes in your body, take careful note of where they are and what they are so that you can relay the information to your health care professional. If any significant difference is noted, it is vital to your health to visit a doctor directly. The earlier skin cancer is detected, the more likely you are to receive treatment successfully.