

## Start By Explaining The Risk Factors

People of any race and sex can get melanoma, but fair-skinned Caucasians are the most likely group to develop this skin cancer. Other important risk factors include:



- Painful sunburns
- Excessive sun exposure before the age of 20 (making it critical to discuss the risks with pre-teens and teens)
- Light-colored hair or eyes
- Many moles or spots on the skin, or a few moles of abnormal shape or size

To give your family members a better understanding of the causes of melanoma, suggest that they talk with their doctor. Or sit down with them and visit some of these Web sites:

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) ■ [www.skincancerprevention.org](http://www.skincancerprevention.org)  
[www.cdc.gov/ChooseYourCover](http://www.cdc.gov/ChooseYourCover)

## Protection Begins With Three Steps

There are three basic steps to melanoma prevention. Make sure your family members understand the importance of taking all three recommended steps.

### Encourage them to:

- Get a total baseline skin cancer examination from their primary care doctor, dermatologist, or dermatology nurse, and make sure they ask when they should be examined next
- Perform careful skin self-examinations once a month
- Practice complete sun protection all the time

## Melanoma Is Now An Epidemic

Of course, you don't want to alarm your family. But the fact is, statistics about melanoma are scary.

### Share the following:

- One American in five (20%) will get skin cancer at some point during their lifetime
- In the past 60 years, the frequency of malignant melanoma has increased 15-fold
- More than 50,000 Americans are diagnosed with melanoma every year
- 575,000 Americans are now living with melanoma

The good news is that the rate of melanoma can be dramatically reduced because it is one of the most preventable cancers.



**Please educate your family members about melanoma prevention...today.**

**MELANOMA**  
FOUNDATION  
NEW ENGLAND

Formerly the Massachusetts Melanoma Foundation

66 Commonwealth Ave., Concord, MA 01742  
Tel. (800) 557-6352 ■ [www.mfne.org](http://www.mfne.org)

## Talking With Your Family About Melanoma

Straight talk about screening and prevention



Developed in cooperation with faculty from the Boston University Department of Dermatology

## You Can Help Control Risk For Your Loved Ones.

**I**t won't be an easy discussion. But now that you have been diagnosed with melanoma, your family members need to hear about protection and examining their skin.

- n Your diagnosis means that your parents, siblings, and children are 2-8 times more at risk than the rest of the population.
- n It's estimated that up to 2 million Americans have a melanoma risk directly related to family history. But at least half of these at-risk family members have never had a skin cancer examination by a dermatologist.

Because of your diagnosis, you can be a powerful messenger within your family. Studies consistently show that family education leads to earlier detection of many cancers—including melanoma.

If there are pre-teens and teenagers in your family, it is critical to emphasize the importance of avoiding sunburns to reduce risk. Though pre-teens and teens are influenced by what their friends do, your teachings will have a positive impact.

So please review this brochure and take one for a family member. Then schedule a family discussion. What you say could save lives.



Encourage your family members to:

### Get A Full Skin Exam

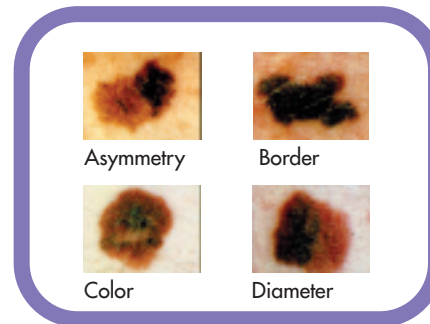
Be sure your family members tell their primary care doctor or dermatologist that a close relative was recently diagnosed with melanoma. Because primary care doctors and nurses may not routinely do skin cancer exams, it is important to make the request specifically. In some cases, a doctor may refer your family member to an expert in skin cancer.

If your family member doesn't have a regular doctor or health insurance, you can visit the American Academy of Dermatology's website [www.aad.org/skinscrn.html](http://www.aad.org/skinscrn.html). You will find information on free skin cancer screenings in your community.

### Examine Skin Once A Month

When your family members get their full skin exams, they should ask the doctor or nurse how to perform a skin self-exam. In only 5 minutes, they can look for the warning signs of melanoma. The two most important things to remember are:

- **Compare** all moles to see if one (or a few) stand out from the rest.
- Watch carefully for moles that change in size, shape or color (as suggested in the pictures below)

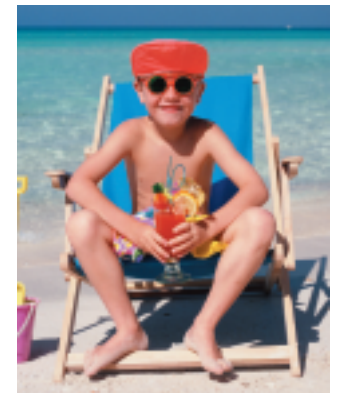


### Always Screen From The Sun

The most effective way to reduce melanoma risk is to protect skin from the sun's harmful rays, which are at their most damaging between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. When going out in the sun, wear protective clothing. And always use sunscreen, following these guidelines:

- Be sure to use sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays and offers at least SPF 15. Read the bottle carefully!
- Put sunscreen on all skin exposed to the sun, including the back and ears
- For adults use at least one ounce (about a palm full) with each application
- Apply about 20-30 minutes before going outside and reapply frequently, especially during peak hours or after swimming

Remember: sunscreen gives protection, but it doesn't mean you can stay in the sun longer. You can still burn while using sunscreen or if sunscreen is used incorrectly. Be careful about the overall amount of time you spend in the sun.



Look on the back for more resources about melanoma

Reassure your family that sun protection is easy and doesn't require major lifestyle changes.