

## Risk Factors

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in the U.S. Over one million cases are diagnosed each year. Although less common than other types of skin cancer, melanoma is the deadliest. The strongest risk factors for developing melanoma are a personal or family history of skin cancer and having many moles. Groups at higher risk for melanoma and other skin cancers are people with increased sensitivity to the sun (has fair skin and natural blonde or red hair, sunburns easily, has difficulty tanning) and a history of excess sun exposure (i.e., sunburn, use of tanning booths), especially in childhood. People of African or Mediterranean descent can sunburn and be at risk for skin cancer. The best protection is to reduce sun exposure—apply (and reapply) sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher and wear long sleeves, a hat and sunglasses, and stay out of the sun during midday hours (10 am – 4 pm).<sup>1</sup>

## Warning Signs and Symptoms

Early warning signs of skin cancer (incl. basal and squamous cell cancer) are the appearance of a new skin growth or changes in the size, shape, texture, or color of any skin mole or lesion that occurs over a month or longer. Other signs are a sore that does not heal or bleeds following a minor injury.<sup>1</sup>



## Early Detection

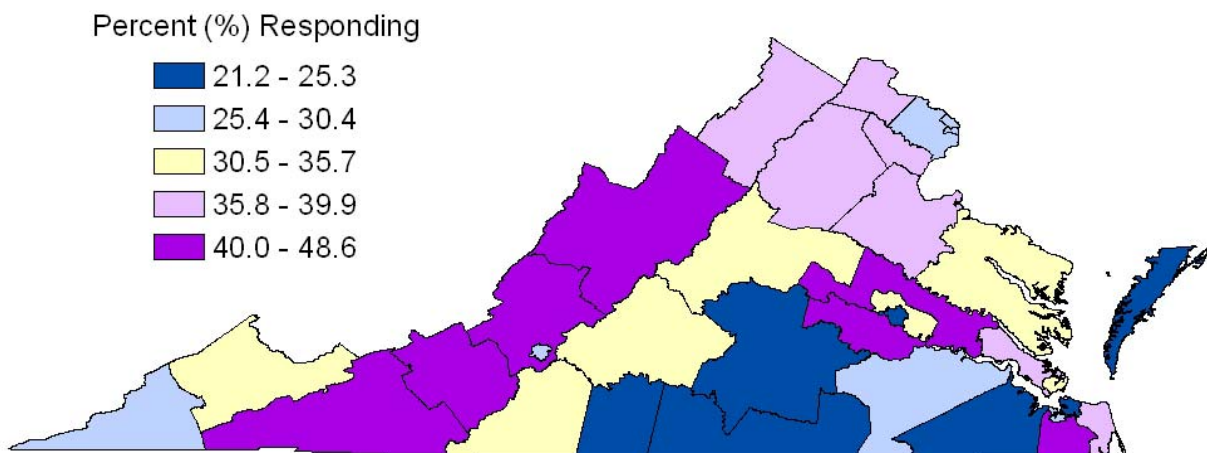
The best way to detect melanoma is to examine your skin regularly and recognize new growths or changes in growths. You should follow the **ABCD rule** when looking for signs of skin cancer: **A** for *asymmetric* growths (one side of the mole doesn't match the other side); **B** for *border* irregularity (edges are ragged, notched, or blurred); **C** for *color* (varying degrees of tan, brown and black); and **D** for *diameter* (greater than 6 mm, or the size of a pencil eraser).<sup>1</sup>

## Melanoma in Virginia

- Melanoma was among the top ten cancers diagnosed among men and women in the U.S. and in Virginia.<sup>2,3</sup> According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated **62,480 people** in the U.S., *including 1,620 people in Virginia*, will be diagnosed with melanoma in 2008. Melanoma will account for 4-5% of all new cancer cases in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>
- Melanoma is rare as a cause of death among people in the U.S. and in Virginia. An estimated **8,420 people** will die from melanoma nationwide in 2008.<sup>1</sup> On average, fewer than 205 deaths from melanoma occurred each year in Virginia between 2001 and 2005.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 2001 and 2005, Virginians were diagnosed with melanoma at a rate of **17.1 cases** per 100,000,<sup>3</sup> and died at a rate of **2.9 deaths** per 100,000.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. incidence and mortality rates were, respectively, 19.4 cases and 2.7 deaths per 100,000. Virginia had the **20<sup>th</sup>** highest melanoma mortality rate (**9<sup>th</sup>** for women) among all states.<sup>2</sup>

- One-third (34%) of melanoma cases are diagnosed in people under age 50.<sup>3</sup> People in the U.S. have a 1.8% chance of being diagnosed with melanoma during their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>
- In Virginia, whites, and particularly white males, have the highest incidence and mortality rates from melanoma. However, fewer blacks are diagnosed with melanoma at an early stage, compared to whites.<sup>3,4</sup> National data indicates that Hispanics, Asians and American Indians have lower melanoma incidence and mortality rates.<sup>2</sup>
- From 1995 to 2005, the melanoma incidence rate in Virginia increased by 66%--from 12.2 to 20.3 cases per 100,000--while the mortality rate remained steady.<sup>3,4</sup>
- The five-year relative survival rate for melanoma is **98.7%** if diagnosed early.<sup>1</sup> Melanoma is treatable when detected early. In Virginia, 74% of people were diagnosed with melanoma in its earliest (local) stage when it's most curable.<sup>3</sup>
- According to a 2004 state health behavior survey, **35%** of Virginia adults reported having a sunburn in the past 12 months. Men, non-Hispanic whites, and young adults were more likely to report previous sunburn.<sup>5</sup> Chickahominy (48.6%), Chesapeake (44.9%), and Alleghany (44.7%) had the highest sunburn rates among the 35 health districts (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 –Sunburn in the Past Twelve Months by Health District, Adults 18 and Older, Virginia, 2004**



**Source:** Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Percentages are weighted.

- In Virginia, there were 55 inpatient hospitalizations for melanoma that occurred in 2006, at a total charge (cost) of over \$1 million. The average length of stay was 3.5 days, and the average charge per stay was \$21,144.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> American Cancer Society *Cancer Facts & Figures 2008* (<http://www.cancer.org>).

<sup>2</sup> Ries LAG, Melbert D, Krapcho M, Stinchcomb DG, et al. (eds.), *SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2005*, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD: 2008 ([http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975\\_2005/](http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2005/)).

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Cancer Registry. Based on combined data from 2001 to 2005. Rates are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

<sup>4</sup> VDH Division of Health Statistics. Based on combined data from 2001 to 2005. Rates are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Rates are population-weighted.

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Health Information Hospital Discharge Patient-Level Dataset.