Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the United States, and rates have been rising for the past 30 years.¹ Nearly 95,400 invasive skin cancers will be diagnosed in the U.S. in 2017, and more than 87,000 of these cases will be melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer.¹ Additionally, over 74,600 cases of non-invasive melanomas and millions of cases of invasive and non-invasive basal and squamous cell skin cancers will also be diagnosed in 2017.¹ In total, nearly 13,600 men and women are expected to die of skin cancer this year, and over 9,700 of those deaths will be from melanoma.¹

The costs associated with skin cancer exceed $8 billion each year – $3.3 billion of that total is for melanoma treatment.²

### Three Types of Skin Cancer

There are three main types of skin cancer:³,⁴

1. **Melanoma** – begin in the melanocytes and is the deadliest form of skin cancer.
2. **Squamous cell cancers** – start in the squamous cells of the skin and typically appear on sun-exposed areas.
3. **Basal cell cancers** – begin in the basal cell layer of the skin and grow slowly and rarely spread to other parts of the body.

### Risk Factors for Skin Cancer

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, in any form, can lead to DNA damage to skin, resulting in short-term adverse effects such as sunburn, eye damage, fainting, and suppression of the immune system.¹,⁵,⁶ The damage of UV radiation is cumulative over an individual’s lifetime.¹ Repeated exposure can result in long-term effects such as premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, solar keratosis, permanent eye damage, and skin and ocular cancers.¹,³

The two types of UV radiation that cause the most damage to skin are:⁷,⁸

- **UVA** – The most common kind of UV light which penetrates below the top layer of skin. Wavelength ranges from 315 to 400 nanometers (nm).
- **UVB** – UV light which does not penetrate as deeply as UVA rays, but still damages the skin. Wavelength ranges from 280 to 315 nm.

Other risk factors include:⁹

- Fair skin, freckling, and/or light hair
- Presence of moles
- Personal or family history of skin cancer
- Older age
- Weakened immune system
- Smoking
- Long-term skin conditions and certain treatments for psoriasis.
Prevention of Skin Cancer

Avoiding exposure to UV light is the best way to prevent skin cancer. This can be done by:

- Avoiding indoor tanning devices.
- Seeking shade when outdoors in the sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wearing sun-protective clothing, such as long sleeves, pants, hats, and UV protective sunglasses.
- Using broad spectrum sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or greater to exposed skin.