

## Do's and Don'ts for Sun Protection and Skin Cancer

Exposure to the sun or ultraviolet light from tanning beds can impact the skin in a variety of ways – including wrinkles, sun spots or freckles. And for one in every five Americans, this exposure can lead to skin cancer. The American Society for Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS) offers the following dos and don'ts for people who wish to diminish their risk of skin cancer.

### *Do's*

- **Do reduce sun exposure.** The best approach to lower skin cancer risk is to minimize time in the sun – especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Wear sun-protective clothing such as sunglasses, wide-brimmed hats, long sleeves and pants.
- **Do use sunscreen** no less than SPF 30 with both UVA and UVB protection every day, and avoid artificial tanning devices.
- **Do recognize the ABCDE's of moles and melanoma.** During a self-exam, look for the following key warning signs: **A**symmetry, **B**order irregularity, **C**olor variability, **D**iameter larger than a pencil eraser and **E**volving or changing moles.
- **Do visit a dermatologic surgeon** if you notice a suspicious mole or lesion. Many people simply visit their primary care doctor for skin issues. However, it is important to realize that a physician who does not specialize in skin-related diseases may have limited experience in treating skin cancer, therefore placing your diagnosis in question and your overall outcome at risk. Most skin cancer is 100 percent treatable if detected early.

### *Don'ts*

- **Don't ignore the signs of skin cancer.** Sometimes what people may perceive as an annoying sore that won't go away, or a mole that has changed in size or color, is really something more serious and possibly an early form of skin cancer. A visit to a dermatologic surgeon should be scheduled if any abnormal moles are discovered. An annual skin cancer screening is necessary to identify cancer in its early stages.
- **Don't forego a professional medical evaluation.** Many people may experience complications from an unqualified practitioner's treatment recommendations, which may include removing an "innocent" freckle (that may in fact be cancerous) with laser resurfacing or microdermabrasion, possibly delaying appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Because some forms of skin cancer can be mistaken for freckles or moles, it's best to always consult a dermatologic surgeon before undergoing any elective cosmetic procedure.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** In order to understand the impact certain treatments may have on your health and in some cases, physical appearance, it is important to ask the following questions:
  - What are my treatment choices? Which do you recommend? Why?
  - What are the expected benefits of each kind of treatment?
  - What are the risks and possible side effects of each treatment?
  - Will the treatment affect my appearance and normal activities?