

# Use 'Sun Sense' When Outdoors

Local Dermatologist offers tips for Skin Cancer Awareness Month

## SPECIAL TO WEST OF

May is here and temperatures in Charleston are in the mid-80s as folks begin heading out to the golf course, beaches, and boats. But remember that May is also National Skin Cancer Awareness Month.

Did you know that melanoma is responsible for 73 percent of skin cancer deaths and one person dies from melanoma every hour in the United States? Melanoma was predicted to occur more than 116,000 times in 2008. Melanoma is detected early in 83 percent of cases, but 17 percent of cases are not. That translates to 20,000 cases per year. If detected early enough, melanoma is completely curable. Less than one-third of melanomas are first detected by doctors. You can help reduce your risk of melanoma by observing some specific signs on your skin.

A recent study at Harvard University

examined survey data related to melanoma detection by doctors. According to the data, ninety-two percent of doctor-detected melanomas on the back were less than two millimeters thick compared with 76 percent of those detected by other people and 63 percent of self-detected melanomas. Melanoma detection by a doctor proved to be the best method of detecting melanomas in their early, thin stages.

For Dr. Todd Schlesinger of West Ashley-based Dermatology & Laser Center of Charleston, these statistics are reminiscent of a story about a Willie Schwenzfier, a prominent local ear, nose, and throat surgeon, who came to the office during one of Dermatology & Laser's Open House events. "He won a hair removal package and we chuckled as he commented he had always wanted to have the hair on his back removed," recalls Schlesinger. "As a matter of course, I saw him during his first visit and noted that it seemed from the



Generously apply sunscreen to all exposed skin using a SPF of at least 15, providing a broad-spectrum protection from both UVA and UVB rays.

look of his skin that he had spent a lot of time out in the sun." Schwenzfier said that he liked spending his leisure time out on the water as he was an avid sailor.

Shortly thereafter, they began his treatments for laser hair removal and planned a time for a complete body examination. As it turned out, the exam could not have been done soon enough. During his skin exam, a physician assistant noted an unusual looking dark spot on his back that happened to be in the hair removal treatment area.

Thankfully, Schwenzfier has had a full recovery from his melanoma that was detected and treated early. He continues to enjoy sailing the waters but uses great sun sense in his outdoor activities.

One of the most important things you can do besides a self-skin examination is to have a complete body examination by a board-certified dermatologist. During this exam, your dermatologist may use a small handheld lighted scope called a dermatoscope. Proper equipment is important, because when

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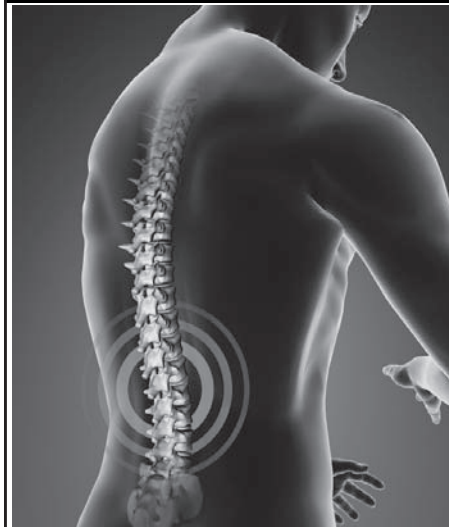
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May is Melanoma Awareness Month

# FREE SKIN CANCER SCREENING

**Dr. Todd Schlesinger, Director of the Dermatology and Laser Center of Charleston is partnering with Roper St. Francis Healthcare Cancer Center to organize a Free Skin Cancer Screening. Many local board certified dermatologists will join Dr. Schlesinger such as Dr. Marta Hampton, Dr. Michael Warren, Dr. Teddy Kotz and his PA Amanda Wright, and others on**

**May 19th • 5-7:30pm**

**AT ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL**

**2095 Henry Tecklenburg Dr., Charleston**

**Open to the public and offered by Dr. Todd Schlesinger and Roper St. Francis Hospital**

**To register for an appointment, call**

**(843) 402-CARE**

*Appointments are preferred but not mandatory.*

**For questions please call 843.556.8886**



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properly used by a trained dermatologist, the dermatoscope raises the chances that he or she will recognize a cancerous mole at its earliest stages.

Based on your history, a complete skin examination should be done every three months to one year. Everyone should have it done yearly, but for those with a personal or family history of skin cancer or excessive sun exposure more frequent examinations are suggested.

## HERE ARE A COUPLE TIPS THAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR "SUN SENSE."

Generously apply sunscreen to all exposed skin using a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 that provides broad-spectrum protection from both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Re-apply every two hours, even on cloudy days, and after swimming or sweating. For optimum results, look for sunscreen that lists the ingredients zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, avobenzone or Mexoryl. Usually, a combination of these ingredients will produce the best protection. Zinc oxide should be at a minimum concentration of 5-10 percent and titanium dioxide should be at least 5 percent.

Wear protective clothing, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses, when possible.

Seek shade when appropriate, remembering that the sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Use extra caution near water, snow, and sand as they reflect the damaging rays of the sun which can increase your chance of sunburn.

Protect children from sun exposure by applying sunscreen often and liberally.

Obtain Vitamin D safely through a healthy diet that includes vitamin supplements. Don't seek the sun.

Avoid tanning beds. Ultraviolet light from the sun and tanning beds causes skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look like you've been in the sun, consider using a sunless self-tanning product, but continue to use sunscreen. ☞

*Article provided by Dermatology & Laser Center of Charleston, located at 2093 Henry Tecklenburg Dr. #300 in West Ashley. For more information, call 556-8886 or log onto [www.dermandlaser.com](http://www.dermandlaser.com)*

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