

Lower Your Skin Cancer Risk with Tips from Atrium Health Navicent

Three blistering sunburns during your lifetime are enough to be considered high risk

MACON, Ga., May 17, 2023 – May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month, and doctors at Atrium Health Navicent want to remind you to be sun-safe when planning summer activities. Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light, an invisible type of radiation that comes from the sun, tanning beds and sunlamps, can lead to skin cancer, as UV rays are especially damaging to skin cells.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States with 4.3 million adults treated for skin cancer annually. One in 5 people will develop skin cancer in their lifetime, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

“Skin cancer risk increases with age and the leading risk is sun exposure, especially sun exposure when you were younger. If you have had three blistering sunburns at any time during your life, you face an increased risk for skin cancer,” said Dr. Paul Dale, chief of surgical oncology for Atrium Health Navicent and medical director for the Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center.

Atrium Health Navicent physicians recommend individuals take the following preventative steps to protect their skin from too much UV exposure and to lower skin cancer risk:

- Stay in the shade as much as possible, under an umbrella, tree or other shelter.
- Use sunscreen and wear protective clothing when you’re outside, even if you’re in the shade. Sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher should be applied in a thick layer on all exposed skin. The higher the SPF, the more protection the sunscreen offers. Be sure to reapply at least every two hours and after swimming, sweating or toweling off. The use of sunscreen is not recommended for babies under 6 months old. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends that infants be dressed in protective clothing and kept in the shade.
- Wear a hat that has a brim that shades your face, ears and the back of your neck. If you wear a baseball cap, protect your ears and the back of your neck with clothing, sunscreen or by staying in the shade.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from UV rays and reduce the risk of cataracts. They also protect the skin around your eyes from sun exposure. Sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays offer the best protection. Wrap-around styles block UV rays from coming in from the side.

Another way to lower your risk is to see the doctor whenever you have concerns about a spot on your skin.

“The earlier we identify cancer, the better we can treat it. So, if you’re concerned about a mole or another spot on your skin, see your primary care doctor. Moles that itch or change shape, size, or color should be examined as soon as possible,” Dale said.

If you’ve had a spot removed because of concerns for skin cancer, Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center offers testing that not only determines the scope of skin cancer, but also the likelihood of reoccurrence throughout your body.

Castle testing is a new test for melanoma and other skin cancers. It helps doctors grade the cancers by their genetic makeup. Another test, Signatera, detects tumor-specific DNA in the patient’s blood, thus detecting recurrence months prior to it showing up on PET or CT scans.

In addition to both the Castle and Signatera specialized testing, the Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center offers a range of services that encompasses all aspects of cancer care, from screening and diagnosis, through treatment and into survivorship.

The Cancer Center is accredited by the Commission on Cancer with Commendation – Gold Level.

“Many skin cancers are superficial and can be treated in a doctor’s office. But for the ones that are deep, patients benefit from a cancer care team that can look at it from every point of view — from diagnosis, treatment with oncology specialists, follow up and even our survivorship clinic. We have a full complement care team that can look at your individual case and determine the best way to help you live your best life,” Dale said.

For more information about Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center, call 478-633-3000. To find a doctor, visit www.NavicentHealth.org and click “Find A Doctor.”

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](http://www. Advocate Health), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the fifth-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation’s leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

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