

SKIN CANCER IN PEOPLE OF COLOR

People of color

This term refers to diverse skin colors and includes people of African, Asian, Latino, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Native American descent.



People of all colors, including those with brown and black skin, get skin cancer. Even if you never sunburn, you can get skin cancer.

When skin cancer develops in people of color, it's often in a late stage when diagnosed. This can be deadly when the person has melanoma, a type of skin cancer that can spread quickly. Treatment for any type of skin cancer can be difficult in the late stages.

The good news is you can find skin cancer early. Found early, most skin cancers, including melanoma, can be cured. There's also a lot you can do to reduce your risk of getting skin cancer.

Talk to your hairdresser or barber

Ask the person who cuts your hair to tell you if you have a growth or odd-looking spot on your scalp.



How people of color can reduce their skin cancer risk

Dermatologists in the United States tell their patients with skin of color to reduce their risk of getting skin cancer by doing the following:

Seek shade whenever possible. The sun causes many skin cancers.

Wear clothing that protects your skin from the sun. A wide-brimmed hat can shade your face and neck. You also want to wear shoes that cover the entire foot. African Americans often develop skin cancer on their feet.

Wear sunscreen. Yes, people of color should wear sunscreen. Dermatologists recommend that people of color use sunscreen that has **broad-spectrum protection, is SPF 30 or greater, and is water resistant.**

Apply sunscreen to dry skin 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors. You want to apply sunscreen to skin that will be bare. Be sure to apply sunscreen every day — even on cloudy days.

When outdoors, reapply sunscreen. You want to reapply every 2 hours and after sweating or getting out of the water.

Never use tanning beds or sunlamps. These emit harmful UV rays, which can cause skin cancer.

What can you do	Skin self-exam: this is a full body exam of your skin
What you need	A full-length mirror and a partner or handheld mirror
When	Monthly
What to look for	People who have skin of color want to look for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dark spot, growth, or darker patch of skin that is growing, bleeding, or changing in any way• Sore that won't heal — or heals and returns• Sore that has a hard time healing, especially if the sore appears in a scar or on skin that was injured in the past• Patch of skin that feels rough and dry• Dark line underneath or around a fingernail or toenail
How to check your skin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look at your skin from head to toe• Examine hard-to-see areas like the top of your head and back by using a handheld mirror or asking a partner to check these areas.
Where to look closely	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check places that get little sun — the bottoms of your feet, toenails, lower legs, groin, and buttocks.• Spend time looking at the skin on your head, neck, and hands. Be sure to look inside your mouth, examine your palms, and check for dark lines around and underneath your fingernails.
What to do if you find something	See a dermatologist. You can find a dermatologist near you by using find-a-derm.aad.org .
Why is this important	Performed monthly, you can find changes to the spots on your skin, which could be skin cancer. When treated early, treatment often cures skin cancer. In the later stages, skin cancer can turn deadly and treatment can be difficult.