



# First Baptist Church Parish Nursing Notes Summer 2003

I know what I am doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. When you call on me, when you pray to me, I'll listen.  
Jeremiah 29: 11-12

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## Sun Sense ..... Skin Cancer Prevention & Detection

As we approach Summer with many opportunities to be outside gardening, playing golf/tennis, or just walking, I want to share some information about prevention and detection of sun damage to our skin. For instance, did you know that one or more blistering sunburns in childhood can result in the development of skin cancer as an adult?

Skin cancer is the most the most common form of cancer in the United States. Over 800,000 new cases of skin cancer were diagnosed in 2002 according to the Centers for Disease Control. The three major types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma. Although basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas can be cured if detected and treated early, they can cause considerable damage and disfigurement. Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer, causing more than 75% of all skin cancer deaths.

Who Is at Risk? Although anyone can get skin cancer, some people are at particular risk. Risk factors include:

- White—light skin color, hair color, eye color
- Family history of skin cancer
- Chronic exposure to the sun
- History of sunburns early in life
- Certain types and large number of moles
- Freckles, which indicate sun sensitivity and sun damage.

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important environmental factor in the development of skin cancer. UV rays from artificial sources of light, such as tanning beds and sun lamps, are just as dangerous and those from the sun, and should also be avoided. The most effective ways to reduce exposure to sunlight are to:

- Minimize exposure to the sun during peak hours of 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Wear clothes and wide-brimmed hats that protect the skin and face.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses that block close to 100% of UV rays.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA & UVB rays and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 or higher. Apply generously 30 minutes before going outside and reapply after swimming, exercising or sweating.
- Avoid using sunlamps and tanning beds.

Detecting skin cancer is just as important as prevention. The American Cancer Society recommends that we get to know our skin through a monthly self-exam. Get to know our own pattern of moles, freckles, blemishes, and birthmarks. This monthly check can alert us to changes in the number, size, shape, or color of spots on our skin or sores that do not heal. The most common skin cancers—basal cell and squamous cell—often take the form of a pale, wax-like, pearly nodule, a red scaly, sharply

outlined patch, or a sore that does not heal. Melanoma often starts as a small, mole-like growth. Almost everyone has moles and most are harmless. A change in a mole's appearance is a sign that you should see your doctor.

The ABCD rule to help us know the signs of melanoma:

- A is for **ASYMMETRY**: One-half of a mole or birthmark does not match the other.
- B is for **BORDER**: The edges are irregular, ragged, notched, or blurred.
- C is for **COLOR**: The color is not the same all over, but may have shades of brown or black, sometimes with patches of red, white, and blue.
- D is for **DIAMETER**: The area is larger than 6 millimeters (1/4 inch—the size of a pencil eraser) or is growing larger.

So let's use good SUN SENSE this summer to protect ourselves and our loved-ones.

We have brochures available in the Fellowship Hall on the health display that have pictures and directions for identifying skin cancers. Please take some and share with your friends. Have a safe and fun summer.

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