# In Your Hands



#### an introduction to skin cancer for outreach workers









### What do I need to know about skin cancer?

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. The three most common types of skin cancer are:

- Basal cell carcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma
- Melanoma causes the most deaths. One person in the US dies every hour from melanoma.

### Sun

Your risk of developing skin cancers increases with exposure to sunlight. If you live and work in areas with year-round bright sunlight, or spend a lot of time outdoors without protective clothing or sunscreen, you are at a greater risk.

## **Pesticides**

Working around pesticides can create a higher risk for developing skin cancer.

## Moles

Most moles are harmless and will never develop into cancer, but having a large number of moles may increase the risk for developing melanoma.

## Risks

There are 5 major risk factors for skin cancer. You can remember these by placing one risk factor on each finger of your hand.

## Age

The older you are, the more exposure you've had to the sun. This increases your risk of developing skin cancer.
However, younger people who spend lots of time in the sun are also at risk.

# Family

If you have a parent or sibling with skin cancer and/or have been diagnosed with skin cancer before, you are at a greater risk of developing skin cancer.

### What do people say?

Here are some common misconceptions about skin cancer and tips on how to respond.

"Skincare is for women." Men are 2-3 times more likely to develop skin cancer than women. This may be due to lower rates of skin protection.

"I only got sunburned as a kid, but I don't burn anymore." One bad sunburn as a kid can double your chances of developing skin cancer later in life.

"If you have dark skin, you can't get skin cancer." False! Having dark skin doesn't protect you from skin cancer. Everyone should protect themselves from the sun.

### What can workers do?

- **Check!** Encourage workers to help family and friends to check their skin. Tell them to look for uneven or oddly colored marks, marks bigger than a pencil eraser, marks changing in shape, size, or color, or bumps or sores that don't go away.
- Ask! Encourage workers to talk to their healthcare provider about all of the different concerns they
  have about their skin.
- Prevent! Workers can prevent skin cancer in the following ways.

The more skin you cover, the better.
Encourage workers to wear long-sleeve shirts, pants, and wide-brimmed hats while on the job.

Wraparound sunglasses protect the sensitive skin around the eyes which can easily burn. A little sunscreen goes a long way. Applying sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher every two hours can reduce a worker's risk of melanoma by half, and squamous cell carcinoma by 40%.

#### Talking Tip #1

Children often spend more time outdoors and burn more easily than adults. Remind workers to cover their children with sunscreen and clothing too!

#### Talking Tip #2

Remind workers that the sun affects their skin every day whether they feel/see a difference or not.

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