

Sun Sense

..... By Dr. Evan Ransom



Summertime is here! I'm sure we're all enjoying getting into the pool or out on the water. Whatever your activity of choice, in a beautiful place like the Bay Area, summer means spending more time outside to barbeque, hike, ride, swim. As a physician, I strongly encourage this, and I want to remind you not to forget the sunscreen.

The warm rays of sun that we long for also contain ultraviolet radiation (UV). This comes in two forms, UVA and UVB. UVB rays are absorbed closer to the surface, causing sunburns and, eventually, spots of abnormal pigmentation. UVA rays penetrate more deeply into the skin, resulting in visible signs of aging such as fine lines, wrinkles and loss of elasticity over time. UVA rays are also thought to be more directly involved in the cellular changes that lead to skin cancer.

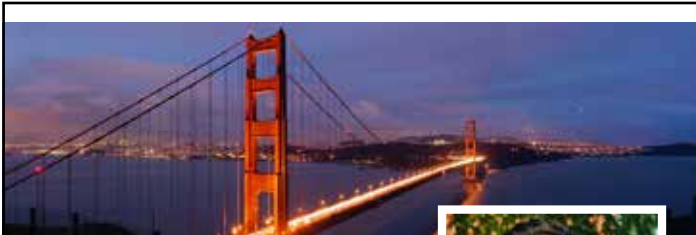
Skin cancers are the most common malignancy in the United States, with between 3 and 4 million new cases each year. The great

majority in areas of the body with the greatest sun exposure, such as the face, scalp, forearms and shoulder regions. Skin cancers come in three main types: basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma. Basal cell (BCC) is by far the most common and tends to look like a pearly papule—a slightly raised, shiny patch, sometimes with a little blood vessel. The next most common is squamous cell (SCC), which presents as a rough patch or a scab that never fully heals. The least common, but most serious, is melanoma. This can have a broad range of appearances but generally looks like an oddly shaped, variably pigmented or ulcerated freckle or mole. Though it is very uncommon to die from non-melanoma skin cancers (BCC and SCC), melanoma claims the lives of nearly 10,000 Americans each year.

The best way to find a skin cancer early, particularly if you are prone to burns and have a history of sun exposure, is a regular skin check with your dermatologist. The good news is that most skin cancers are treatable, and the success rates for non-melanoma skin cancer are nearly 99 percent. In many cases, a specific technique called Mohs micrographic surgery is effective. In this procedure, named after dermatologist Frederick Mohs, very thin layers of skin are meticulously removed, stained and sequentially examined under a microscope. By removing layers of tissue in such an incremental manner, the physician can be sure that all tumor tissue is excised and can simultaneously spare nearby normal tissue. Frequently, skin cancers affect the delicate and complex facial structures. In these cases, the Mohs surgeon will often refer patients for reconstruction to a plastic surgeon. This helps to ensure the best possible outcome, both in terms of cancer care and cosmetic appearance, especially in highly visible and functional areas, such as the nose, eyelids and lips.

You may be asking, "What do I do with this information?" I want you to take a close look at your sunscreen. In my practice, I recommend sunscreens that protect from UVA and UVB, and I have a preference for products that contain a physical blocker. (Look for "broad spectrum" on the label.) These sunscreens actually reflect the UV radiation away from the skin using tiny particles of zinc, magnesium or titanium. Recent improvements have made these sunscreens sheerer and also available in spray-on form. Lastly, when you're sweating, or if you're doing water sports, waterproof sunscreens can be very helpful. Regardless of the type or brand, make sure to reapply it regularly.

Evan R. Ransom, MD is a facial plastic surgeon practicing in San Francisco and Marin County. He specializes in aesthetic and reconstructive surgery of the face, neck, nose, ears and eyelids. Dr. Ransom regularly performs Mohs surgery reconstructions for complex and sensitive facial skin cancers. He also treats the visible signs of aging that result from sun exposure, using the latest in surgical and non-surgical techniques.



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Dr. Evan Ransom is an Ivy League-trained, double-board certified facial plastic surgeon. His practice includes surgery for the aging face, rhinoplasty (nose reshaping), and reconstruction after trauma or skin cancer removal. Dr. Ransom also provides minimally-invasive treatments, including Botox®, fillers, laser resurfacing, IPL, non-surgical tightening (ThermiTight™), and non-invasive body sculpting (SculpSure®).

Community service is very important to Dr. Ransom. He performs pro bono cleft lip and palate surgery with Healing the Children. Our next mission, to Peru, is in April 2018.

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