

For Immediate Release
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About 15,114 Coachella Valley Residents Are Living with Skin Cancer

*The month of July observes UV Safety Month. This month is dedicated to raising awareness about the harmful effects of ultraviolet (UV) rays. **In this Press Release, we provide Coachella Valley level statistics, risk factors of skin cancer, and more information regarding screening and treatment.***

Palm Desert, CA (7 July 2020) – Cancer can begin almost anywhere in the body, and there are more than a hundred different types.¹ The most common type of cancer in the United States is skin cancer.² The main types of skin cancer are squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and melanoma. A change in your skin is the most common sign of skin cancer and is caused by overexposure to UV light.³

Coachella Valley Data

In the Coachella Valley, 12.5% of local adults (42,749 people) are cancer survivors. **Of these cancer survivors, 35.4% of Coachella Valley adults (15,114 people) reported having skin cancer.** It is the most common type of cancer reported in our community followed by breast cancer (8,273 people) and prostate cancer (6,139 people).

Risk Factors

Studies suggest being exposed to UV radiation and the sensitivity of a person's skin to UV rays are risk factors for skin cancer.⁴ UV radiation refers to the invisible rays that are part of the energy that the sun generates. It is important to mention sun lamps and tanning beds also give off UV radiation.

Risk factors differ for nonmelanoma and melanoma cancers. For example, risk factors for nonmelanoma skin cancer include: being exposed to natural sunlight or artificial sunlight for a long duration, having a fair complexion, having actinic keratosis, having

¹ What is Cancer? (2015). National Cancer Institute. Available online at <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/what-is-cancer>

² What is Skin Cancer? (2020). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available online at https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/what-is-skin-cancer.htm

³ Ibid

⁴ Skin Cancer Prevention (2019). National Cancer Institute. Available online at <https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-prevention-pdq>

past treatment with radiation, having a weakened immune system, and being exposed to arsenic.⁵

Risk factors for melanoma skin cancer include: being exposed to natural sunlight or artificial sunlight for a long duration, having a fair complexion, having a history of many blistering sunburns, having several large or many small moles, having a family history of unusual moles, and having a family or personal history of melanoma.⁶

Prevention and Screening

Although there is not enough empirical evidence that suggests protecting your skin and eyes from the sun lowers your chances of getting skin cancer, skin experts still suggest the following: using sunscreen that protects against UV radiation, staying out of the sun for long periods of time, especially when the sun is at its strongest, and wearing long sleeve shirts, long pants, sun hats, and sunglasses, when outdoors.⁷

Preventive care is a proactive way to take care of your health and to detect cancer at an early stage. It is important to contact your healthcare provider and schedule a screening test as a preventative measure if you notice unusual moles, changes in your skin, or if you have an increased risk of skin cancer.⁸ It is important to mention having a skin exam to screen for skin cancer has not been shown to decrease your chance of dying from skin cancer.⁹ However, certain skin cancers such as melanoma are easier to cure if they are found before it spreads.¹⁰

Treatment

There are different types of cancer treatment for patients with basal cell carcinoma (nonmelanoma skin cancer), squamous cell carcinoma (nonmelanoma skin cancer), and actinic keratosis (sometimes becomes squamous cell carcinoma). The eight types of standard treatment include: surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, photodynamic therapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, chemical peel, and other drug therapy.¹¹ Additionally, there are new types of treatment being tested in clinical trials. It is important for patients to discuss with their healthcare provider which treatment is best for them and the side effects associated with each treatment.

To see more statistics regarding health information in the Coachella Valley, please see our latest 2019 Executive Report at: www.HARCdata.org

To schedule an interview with Dr. Jenna LeComte-Hinely call 760.404.1945 or email jlecomte-hinely@HARCdata.org.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Skin Cancer Screening (2020). National Cancer Institute. Available online at <https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-screening-pdq>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Skin Cancer Treatment (2020). National Cancer Institute. Available online at <https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-treatment-pdq>

About HARC

HARC, Inc. (Health Assessment and Research for Communities) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing research and evaluation services related to health and wellness. HARC is funded in part by grants, donations, and the consulting services they offer. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at 760.404.1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCdata.org

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