



Skin Cancer -- Skin Self-Examination

Statistics show that approximately 50% of all people are likely to suffer from skin cancer by age 65, so everyone should know how to perform skin self-exams to spot potential problems. Self-exams may help lead to treatment in the earliest stage of skin cancer, when outcomes are best. Basal and squamous cell carcinomas have a cure rate of up to 90% with early detection and treatment. Even deadly melanoma may be cured if identified and treated early enough.

Performing a skin self-exam involves carefully inspecting the entire surface of the skin, including areas that receive little or no sun exposure. It's possible to develop skin cancer anywhere on the body, so a thorough skin exam is important.

Body Check Checklist

- face
- neck
- scalp (use a comb or brush to help expose all areas of the scalp)
- chest
- trunk/abdomen
- back (upper and lower)
- buttocks
- genitals
- hands (including palms and between fingers)
- arms (including the back side and underarms)
- upper legs/thighs (including the back side)
- lower legs/calves
- feet (including soles and between toes)

Examine skin in a room with good lighting. Use a handheld mirror or another person to help examine hard-to-see areas. Use a full-length mirror to help examine the back of the body as well.

Get into the habit of performing a skin self-exam about every month or so; people at high risk for skin cancer should perform self-exams more frequently. A healthcare provider can help determine an appropriate skin self-exam schedule.