

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

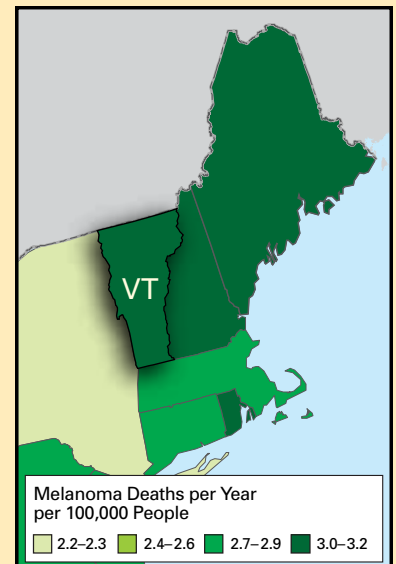
VERMONT

Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.¹⁻⁴ This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for Vermont and the United States as a whole.

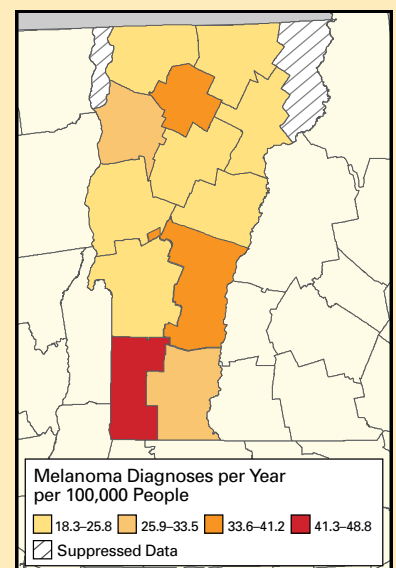
small state: *Big Problem*

- **Sunburns on the Rise.** A 2004 survey found that 47.1% of white adults in Vermont had at least one sunburn in the past year—an increase from 39.1% in 1999.⁵ Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.⁶⁻⁸
- **New Cases of Melanoma.** Vermont had the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the U.S. from 2001-2005, 63% higher than the national average.^{9,10} In 2008, an estimated 180 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma, which is responsible for 75% of all skin cancer deaths.²
 - Bennington County has the highest rate of melanoma diagnoses among counties nationwide,¹¹ 179% above the national average.⁹
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** Approximately 20 people in Vermont die of melanoma every year.¹² Vermont had the 13th highest melanoma death rate nationally from 2001-2005—11.1% higher than the U.S. average.¹³

Melanoma Death Rates, 2001–2005¹² All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2001–2005⁹ All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



¹⁻⁴² All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html

survivor story: *Marcelle Leahy*



Growing up, I was always in the sun and sunburned. All that sun finally caught up to me in 2003 when my new dermatologist decided to biopsy a discolored spot on my face. I'd had it for years, but something about it didn't feel right. The result: a large melanoma in situ.

The first two operations to remove it weren't successful, leaving my face disfigured and still with cancer. Mohs surgery was scheduled with a different doctor to remove the rest. After six excisions during the Mohs, an area of skin the size of my palm was removed, and I was finally cancer-free. I learned to be an advocate for my own health, and to keep asking questions. I've had at least six nonmelanoma skin cancers removed since, and am always on the lookout for any skin changes.

My advice: we know how to prevent and detect skin cancer, so share your knowledge with your loved ones. I'll never know which sunburn gave me cancer, but I'll certainly do all I can to protect my grandchildren from getting one.

Marcelle Leahy likes to make time for cancer prevention, education, and research programs. She is married to Senator Patrick Leahy; they have 3 children and 5 grandchildren.

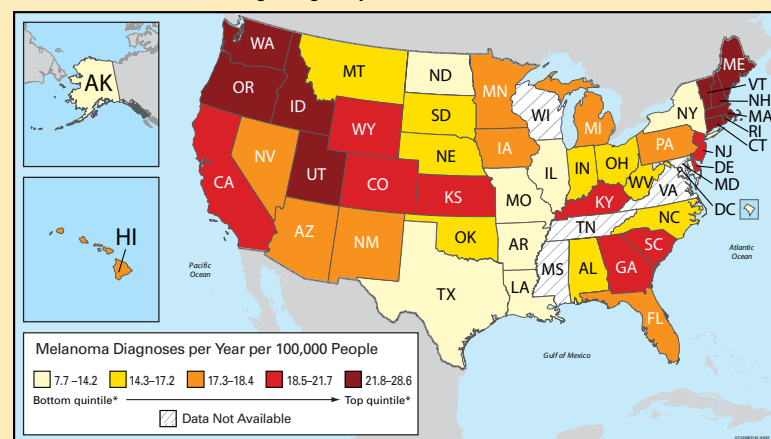
The Cost of Skin Cancer

In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost \$2 billion annually.¹⁴⁻¹⁵

statistics: *Cause for Concern*

- In 2008, more than 1 million people were diagnosed with skin cancer, making it the most common of all cancers.¹⁻⁴ More people were diagnosed with skin cancer in 2008 than with breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined.² About 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime.¹⁷
- One American dies of melanoma almost every hour.²
- Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults (15-29 years old).¹⁸
- For people born in 2005, 1 in 55 will be diagnosed with melanoma¹³—nearly 30 times the rate for people born in 1930.¹⁹

National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2001–2005¹⁶
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages, Age-adjusted Rates



* Please note that delays in reporting melanoma cases to cancer registries are more common since they are usually diagnosed and treated in non-hospital settings such as physician offices. States are grouped into quintiles based on rates of melanoma diagnoses. A quintile is a statistical “block” representing 20% of a total. Because data are available for only 45 states and D.C., four quintiles include nine states, and one includes 10. For example, the ten states with the highest melanoma rates—21.8 to 28.6 diagnoses per 100,000 residents every year—are in the top quintile.

what works: *An Ounce of Prevention*

- **Unprotected exposure to ultraviolet light—a known human carcinogen—is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer.**^{6,17,20-24} Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one’s risk.^{2-4, 25-26}
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one’s life.**²⁷⁻³³ Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.^{2, 34-38}
- The CDC found evidence that **education and policy approaches in primary schools (for children) and in recreational or tourism settings (for adults) can improve sun safety behaviors.**³⁹⁻⁴⁰
- Student self-reported data⁴¹—collected as part of the U.S. EPA’s SunWise Program—showed that **teachers using the SunWise Tool Kit for 1-2 hours yearly can spur increases in students’ sun safety knowledge and attitudes and small to modest improvements in short-term sun safety behaviors.**⁴²
- Using the data mentioned above, published modeling results show SunWise teaching between 1999 and 2015 could prevent more than 50 premature deaths and 11,000 future cases of skin cancer, saving the country more than \$30 million in medical costs and productivity losses.⁴²

skin cancer prevention: *Action Steps*

- **Do Not Burn.** Overexposure to the sun is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer.
- **Avoid Sun Tanning and Tanning Beds.** UV light from tanning beds and the sun causes skin cancer and wrinkling.
- **Use Sunscreen.** Generously apply a broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Reapply at least every two hours, and after swimming or sweating.
- **Cover Up.** Wear protective clothing, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses with 99-100% UVA/UVB protection, when possible.
- **Seek Shade.** Seek shade when the sun’s UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- **Watch for the UV Index.** Pay attention to the UV Index when planning outdoor activities to prevent overexposure to the sun.

¹⁻⁴² All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html