

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

## NEW MEXICO

**Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in the United States.**<sup>1-4</sup> This fact sheet presents statistics about skin cancer for New Mexico and the United States as a whole.

### just the facts: *Skin Cancer in New Mexico*

- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 41.3% of white adults in New Mexico had at least one sunburn in the past year.<sup>5</sup> Sunburns are a significant risk factor for the development of skin cancer.<sup>6-8</sup>
- **New Cases of Melanoma.** An estimated 460 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009.<sup>2</sup> Melanoma is responsible for about 75% of all skin cancer deaths.<sup>2,9</sup>
  - The rate of new melanoma diagnoses has more than doubled in New Mexico between 1975 and 2007.<sup>10</sup>
  - Los Alamos County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state—higher than 95% of counties nationwide.<sup>10</sup>
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 52 people in New Mexico die of melanoma every year.<sup>11</sup>
  - The melanoma death rate in Sandoval County is about 40% higher than the national and statewide average.<sup>11</sup>
  - The melanoma death rate among white residents of New Mexico is 24% higher than the national average for this group.<sup>11</sup>
  - The melanoma death rate among women in New Mexico is about 18% higher than the national average for this group.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1-40</sup> All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: [www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html)

### survivor story: *John F. Klein-Robbenhaar*



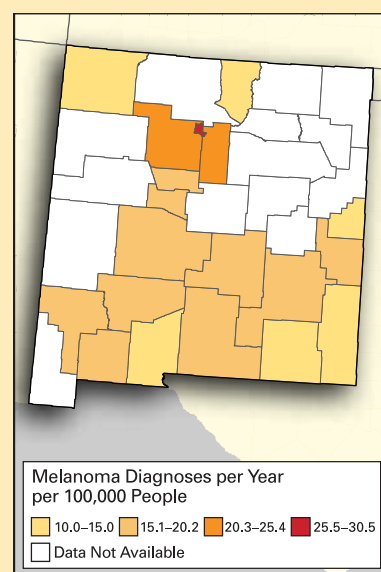
I was diagnosed with Clark's Level I Melanoma when I was just 29 years old. The malignant mole was first identified by my physician during a routine visit. Although I had never thought to examine my skin before, I suggested my doctor perform a skin check because my cousin died of skin cancer ten years earlier. When my doctor called with the test results, I was in disbelief.

Fortunately, I only had to undergo one surgery to remove the melanoma from my thigh. Since then, I have had over a dozen suspicious moles removed, all with negative results.

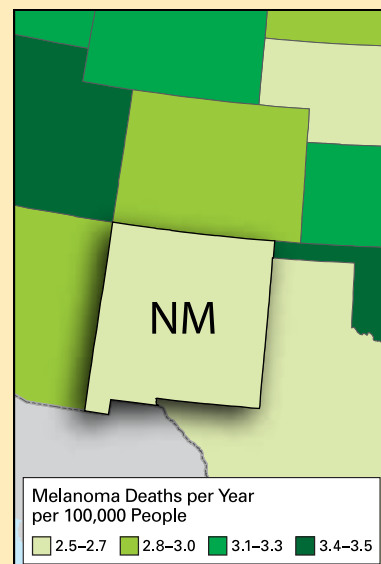
Growing up in Connecticut, I lathered on baby oil at the beach and worked on my tan. Now I try to always wear a wide-brimmed hat, ample clothing, and sunscreen. By making simple changes in my lifestyle and habits, I have been able to keep the melanoma from recurring for over a decade. In addition to protecting myself, I have taught my children to treat the sun with respect. I've participated in sun-safe activities at their elementary school, and have tried to spread the word about sun safety to family and friends. Limit your sun exposure and keep a close watch on your skin!

*John F. Klein-Robbenhaar, a resident of Albuquerque, New Mexico, has now been cancer-free for 13 years.*

**Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2003–2007<sup>10</sup>**  
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



**Melanoma Death Rates, 2003–2007<sup>11</sup>**  
All Races, Both Sexes, All Ages



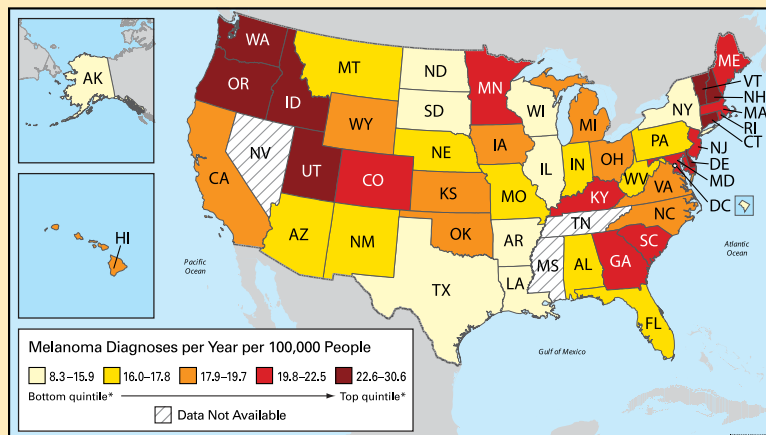
## The Cost of Skin Cancer

*In the U.S., medical costs to treat skin cancer are estimated at almost \$2 billion annually.<sup>12-13</sup>*

### statistics: *Cause for Concern*

- **In 2009, more than 1 million people were diagnosed with skin cancer, making it the most common of all cancers.**<sup>1-4</sup> More people were diagnosed with skin cancer in 2009 than with breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined.<sup>2</sup> About **1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime.**<sup>14</sup>
- **One American dies of melanoma almost every hour.**<sup>2</sup>
- **Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults (15-29 years old).**<sup>15</sup>
- **For people born in 2009, 1 in 58 will be diagnosed with invasive melanoma<sup>16</sup>—more than 25 times the rate for people born in 1935.**<sup>17</sup>

**National Annual Rate of New Melanoma Diagnoses, 2003–2007<sup>10</sup>**  
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 setting 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 47 states and D.C., four quintiles include ten states, and one quintile includes eight. For example, the eight states with the highest melanoma rates—22.6 to 30.6 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.**<sup>6,14,18-22</sup> Taking simple steps as early in life as possible can reduce one’s risk.<sup>2-4,23,24</sup>
- **Early detection of melanoma can save one’s life.**<sup>25-31</sup> Skin examinations may be the best way to detect skin cancer early.<sup>2,32-36</sup>
- 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.**<sup>37-38</sup>
- Student self-reported data<sup>39</sup>—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.**<sup>40</sup>
  - 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.<sup>40</sup>

### 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.

<sup>1-40</sup> All references can be found on the SunWise Web site at: [www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/statefacts.html)