

facts about: *Skin Cancer*

# PENNSYLVANIA

**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 Pennsylvania and the United States as a whole.

## just the facts: *Skin Cancer in Pennsylvania*

- **Sunburns.** A 2004 survey found that 42.7% of white adults in Pennsylvania 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 3,440 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 is about 41% higher among men than women in Pennsylvania.<sup>10</sup>
  - Montour County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses in the state—higher than 96% of counties nationwide.<sup>10</sup>
- **Deaths from Melanoma.** About 426 people in Pennsylvania die of melanoma every year. From 1975–2007, the melanoma death rate more than doubled among residents over the age of 50.<sup>11</sup>
  - The rate of melanoma deaths among men is more than double the rate among women in Pennsylvania.<sup>11</sup>
  - Monroe County has the highest melanoma death rate in Pennsylvania—59% higher than the national average.<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: *Richard Beston*



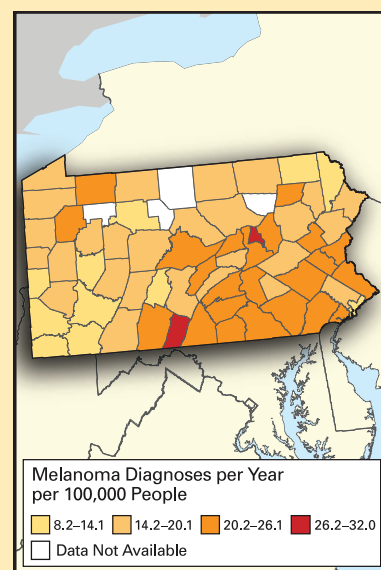
I thought nothing of the small bump on my shoulder until my doctor got worried during an unrelated visit. He sent me for a biopsy that day. The diagnosis was shocking: Stage IV melanoma. My wife, Ann, was pregnant with our second child, and our first was only 11 months. It was devastating.

I underwent a clinical trial, chemotherapy, immune-boosting shots and three surgeries—removing parts of one lung and an entire lobe of the other. Five years later, I had a non-melanoma skin cancer removed in another surgery. My oncologist calls me a miracle; I've been cancer-free eight years!

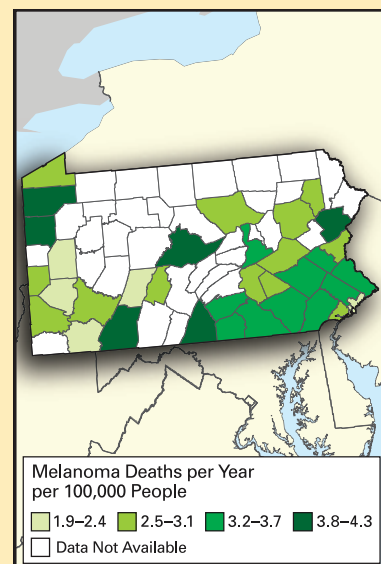
As a child and adult, I got blistering sunburns all too often, once so severe I needed medical care! I didn't know my fair skin and family history of melanoma put me at risk. I limit sun exposure as best I can now and keep sunscreen on hand for the times I can't. I spend time with melanoma patients trying to give them hope. And I'm always reminding people: when in doubt, get it checked out!

*Richard Beston, a resident of Paoli, PA, works to advance melanoma research.*

### 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



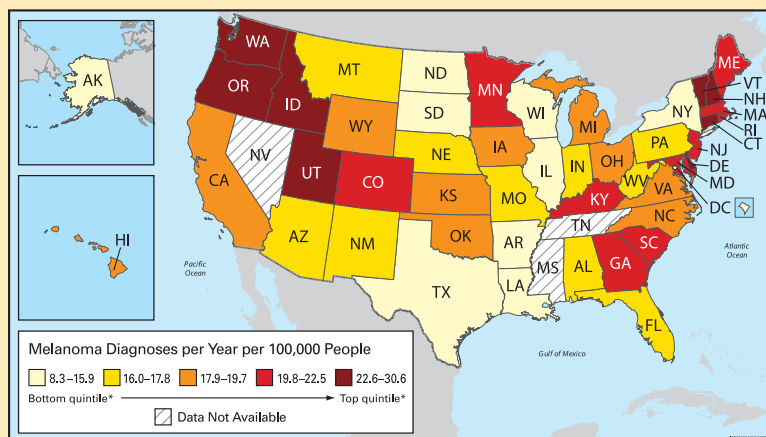
## The Cost of Skin Cancer

*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)