

Springtime sun could cause melanoma

■ **SKIN:** May has been named Melanoma Month in order to increase awareness about skin cancer

By Amy Palanuk
Higher Education Reporter

Ahhh, springtime in Oregon. After months of rain and sloshy shoes, Oregon finally displayed the surprises of spring this weekend. And as the sun beamed down on the bursting buds, hundreds of people slipped on the summer shorts, ready to have a little fun.

But for many, that fun soon turned into frustration.

They forgot their sunscreen and got a painful sunburn on their arms and legs.

While a sunburn may soon fade into a nice ruddy tan, experts agree that unprotected exposure can eventually lead to higher chances of skin cancer. In an effort to increase awareness of the dangers of skin cancer in the early months of sunshine, May has been named Melanoma Month.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States and can be deadly if left untreated. That's why doctors encourage self-examination and regular checkups for discolored spots on the skin. If caught in the early stages, skin cancer — including the most dangerous kind, malig-

TOP 10 SUN-SAFETY TIPS

- Stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB rays and has a Sun Protection Factor of 15 or greater, even on cloudy days.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours when outdoors, especially if you're swimming or sweating.
- Wear protective, tightly woven clothing. Dark colors give more protection.
- Wear a 4-inch-wide broad-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protective lenses even when walking short distances.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible.
- Avoid reflective surfaces, which can reflect up to 85 percent of the sun's damaging rays.
- Protect children by keeping them out of the sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Apply sunscreens, beginning at six months of age.
- Avoid sunlamps, tanning beds and tanning parlors.
- Listen to the UV Index reports. Take special care when exposure levels are 5-10+.

nant melanoma — can be cured.

Self-examination is quick and easy. Look for moles that have changed in size, color, shape or texture. If you notice any new moles or freckles, be aware that these are signs of skin damage. If changes in the skin occur, it may be time to visit a dermatologist.

The Student Health Center has a retired physician who has a special interest in dermatology and skin diseases and sees students who have serious concerns about their skin.

"We can also do surgery at the health center to remove nevi

(birthmarks or moles in the early stages of malignant melanoma)," said Dr. Gerald Fleischli, director of the health center.

People with the highest risk of melanoma generally have fair complexions that burn or blister easily; blonde or gray eyes; and blonde or red hair. Excessive exposure to the sun during childhood and teen years and blistering sunburns before the age of 20 can also lead to higher chances of getting skin cancer. If there is a family history of melanoma or more than 50 moles on the body before the age of 20, the risk is also higher.

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