

healthy hood river

Top tips for preventing skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society. More skin cancers are diagnosed in the US each year than all other cancers combined. The number of skin cancer cases has been going up over the past few decades.

The good news is that you can do a lot to protect yourself and your family from skin cancer, or catch it early so that it can be treated effectively. Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. Most of this exposure comes from the sun, but some may come from man-made sources, such as indoor tanning beds and sun lamps.

You don't need any x-rays or blood tests to find skin cancer early – just your eyes and a mirror. If you have skin cancer, finding it early is the best way to make sure it can be treated with success.

Skin cancer starts in the cells of the skin. Some other types of cancer start in other parts of the body and can spread to the skin, but these are not skin cancers.

There are 3 main types of skin cancers: Basal cell skin cancers (basal cell carcinomas); Squamous cell skin cancers (squamous cell carcinomas); and Melanomas – the first two are more common while melanomas are more dangerous.

Melanomas can occur anywhere on the body, but are more likely to start in certain areas. The trunk (chest and back) is the most common place in men. In women, the legs are the most common site. The neck and face are other common places for melanoma to start.

Melanomas are not as common as basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers, but they can be far more serious. Like basal cell and squamous cell cancers, melanoma is almost always curable in its early stages. But if left alone, melanoma is much more likely to spread to other parts of the body, where it can be very hard to treat.

People who get a lot of exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays are at greater risk for skin cancer.

Sunlight is the main source of UV rays, but you don't have to avoid the sun completely. And it would be unwise to stay inside if it would keep you from being active, because physical activity is important for good health. But getting too much sun can be harmful. There are some steps you can take to limit your exposure to UV rays.

Some people think about sun protection only when they spend a day at the lake, beach, or pool. But sun exposure adds up day after day, and it happens every time you are in the sun.

Simply staying in the shade is one of the best ways to limit your UV exposure. If you are going to be in the sun, "Slip! Slop! Slap! and Wrap!" is a catchphrase that can help you remember some of the key steps you can take to protect yourself from UV rays:

- Slip on a shirt.
- Slop on sunscreen.
- Slap on a hat.
- Wrap on sunglasses to protect the eyes and skin around them.

An obvious but very important way to limit your exposure to UV light is to avoid being outdoors in direct sunlight too long. This is particularly important between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when UV light is strongest. If you are unsure how strong the sun's rays are, use the shadow test: if your shadow is shorter than you are, the sun's rays are the strongest, and it's important to protect yourself.

If you plan to be outdoors, you may want to check the UV Index for your area. The UV Index usually can be found in local newspaper, TV, radio, and online forecasts. It's also on the EPA's website at www.epa.gov/sunwise/uv-index.html and in many smartphone apps (see www.epa.gov/enviro/mobile).

Care to Yoga?



Care Center brings free community yoga to Hood River

BY TRISHA WALKER

News staff writer

When Activities Director Christine Shannon began her free "Gentle Yoga for Beginning Seniors 50 and Over" at the Hood River Care Center mid-February, she started with three students.

Soon, the class soon grew to five, then seven. Now, she has anywhere from 12 to 18 men and women regularly attending, with ages ranging from 49 to 85.

"The hardest part of yoga is actually coming to class; the second hardest part of

yoga is actually leaving class, because it feels so amazing," Shannon said.

While she teaches yoga to Care Center residents three days a week, the Gentle Yoga series is for community members. She started the classes with three objectives in mind.

"One, to get the community affiliated with our facility," she said. "Two, to promote health within our community, and three, our class is free — no charge for students to come. I do know how expensive yoga classes can be, so I do not want money to be an issue for someone not to participate."

The Care Center has some mats, blocks and bands, but Shannon encourages students to bring their own equipment if possible. The class meets in the cafeteria, so space is a factor, although Shannon said there's room for 30 participants — but probably not more than that.

At a recent class, she began with two questions: "Got any owies today? Anything we need to work on?" She leads the class through a series of moves, offering modifications and encouraging students to sit if needed.

"I modify the class so everyone can participate," Shannon said. "It is beautiful to watch."

She's been practicing yoga for 20 years, and has been certified to teach for eight. She has a bachelor's degree in physical education and health from Linfield College, is a member of National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) with a CPT certified



personal trainer certificate, has had restorative yoga training, and has 200 hours of training in both Hot yoga and Vinyasa through Corepower. She continuously takes training courses to expand her knowledge and skills.

Her experience with senior yoga comes from "working with older populations in retirement facilities, my Alzheimer training, and last but not least, my own practice. I just turned 50 this year myself," she said.

Shannon gets a lot of positive feedback from her students, who say they are more flexible and have better balance, sleep better, and are more apt to think about what they eat and drink. Some have never practiced yoga before taking her classes; others are seasoned athletes and yogis. All feel comfortable in her class.

Peter Zurcher, 68, was an endurance athlete who started yoga in 2008 on the recommendations of friends when he noticed his body becoming less flexible. Shannon's classes are "the right level for me," he said. "I should have started 10 years earlier, but running, mountaineering, hiking and climbing were a higher priority."

Liz Heacock is a newcomer who "always wanted to do it" and has found the class to

be a good fit. "I think (yoga) is good to feel calmer. I think it's good exercise," she said. She was initially worried about participating because of back issues, but her physical therapist told her "it's good to go; just do all you can do," she said.

"We do not take life too serious in class," said Shannon. "There is no right or wrong answers or postures. There are always modifications."

For those who wish to "give back" in exchange for the free classes, there are a number of volunteer opportunities at the Care Center, ranging from yardwork to visiting one-on-one with residents, and many of her students do.

But mostly, Shannon is grateful to be able to offer the free classes to the community. "Yoga has been my lifeline during some challenging events in my life," Shannon said. "I feel I am very fortunate to have this gift to teach yoga, to help and inspire others. It is my gift I can give freely and expect nothing in return but love and gratitude."

The classes run each Wednesday from 10-11 a.m. in the Care Center cafeteria. For more information, call Shannon at 541-386-2688, extension 4621.



Photos by Trisha Miller

LIZ HEACOCK, 74, and Margaret Marshall, 85, are regulars in Activities Director Christine Shannon's Wednesday morning yoga class at the Hood River Care Center (pictured above). "Christine is wonderful. It's a really nice thing she's done," said Marshall. At top, Dave Radley, left, and Doris Stevens stretch at the beginning of class. "I love the instructor," said Stevens. "You get a good workout and it relaxes you."

Pain Clinic joins stem cell research registry

Columbia Pain Management, PC will join 28 other clinical research sites across the country in a registry to track outcomes from stem cell therapies for the treatment of painful musculoskeletal conditions. The registry will track pain, function, and quality of life as well as adverse events after patients receive the interventions.

Stem cells are undifferentiated cells that are capable of repairing damaged or diseased tissue. Scientists have been keenly interested in how the cells can be used in various medical conditions ranging from arthritis to blindness. "This is a cutting edge therapy for patients with painful arthritic conditions and injuries, but we need to carefully monitor outcomes to gauge their effectiveness," said Dr. David Russo, physician and sub-investigator on the study.

Stem cell therapies for musculoskeletal conditions involve harvesting stem

cells from a patient's bone marrow. The cells are concentrated and then transplanted into in another part of the body. Neither embryonic tissue nor cells from the reproductive system are used. The procedures, approved by the FDA when performed within a single day in an outpatient setting, are considered safe and are compliant with all applicable Federal stem cell treatment standards.

"It's amazing that sophisticated treatments once only available at large medical centers now can be offered locally," Russo said. Still, most health plans do not cover stem cell therapies, but may cover other associated services and tests required for the procedure. Patients must undergo a thorough medical evaluation and have no history of blood cancers, immune deficiency disease, or bleeding disorders to be considered an appropriate candidate.

For more information,

please contact study coordinators Cherie Flory, RN or Lisa Linker, RN at 541-386-9500 extension 202.

Columbia Pain Management, PC, is the Gorge's only comprehensive and interventional pain management center specializing in minimally invasive and non-operative treatment of spinal pain, musculoskeletal medicine, regenerative medicine, and the medical rehabilitation of patients with orthopedic and neurological injuries.

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