

**To Your Health!**

By Judy Hargis, P.A



**Skin Cancers – A Growing Problem**

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. More than 2 million people are diagnosed with skin cancer annually. Many people are diagnosed with more than one skin cancer. Each year

there are more new cases of skin cancer than the combined incidence of breast, colon, prostate and lung cancers. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. Skin cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal skin cells. Skin cancers can spread to surrounding areas causing tissue damage, and in some cases to vital organs, becoming deadly. There are several types of skin cancer you should be aware of:

Actinic Keratosis is the most common precancer. It usually appears on sun exposed areas such as the face, bald areas on the scalp, lips and back of hands. It can appear as a slightly raised, scaly red patch. If di-

agnosed early, it can be easily treated, preventing the development of skin cancer.

Basal Cell Carcinoma is the most frequently occurring skin cancer. It often appears like a red open sore, red patch, or pink, shiny growth. It can be diagnosed with a biopsy.

Dysplastic moles (atypical moles) can resemble a melanoma. They tend to have irregular borders and may have more than one color such as black and brown. People have increased risk of developing melanoma if they have multiple dysplastic moles. It is important to have regular follow up with your health care provider, if diagnosed with atypical moles.

Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer. There are approximately 120,000 new cases each year. Approximately half of them are invasive melanomas. It is curable if diagnosed and treated early. They are often dark in color with irregular borders. The important thing to remember is that if you see a change in a mole's size, shape or color, or if it becomes crusted or bleeds, it needs to be checked by your health care provider.

Squamous cell carcinomas are mainly caused by sun exposure over time. There are over 70,000 cases diagnosed each year. They can become deadly if not

diagnosed early. They often appear as a persistent, scaly red patch with irregular borders, sometimes with crusting or bleeding as it becomes more advanced. Early diagnosis by biopsy is critical to effective treatment.

The important message to you is that if you see change in your skin that appears abnormal, go to your health care provider and have it checked immediately. Some skin cancers can be difficult to diagnose by appearance alone. Skin cancer can often be diagnosed by a simple in-office biopsy, if it is brought to your health care provider's attention early. Your health care provider will know what to look for. Check your skin on a regular basis, so you know it well enough to recognize a change. Early detection is critical to successful treatment. There are some excellent resources that provide more detailed information on skin cancers, diagnosis and treatment. Remember the most important thing that you can do is to prevent skin cancer from developing by avoiding sun exposure and using sun screen, as discussed in my last column. Be safe and enjoy your summer!

Two reliable resources for information on skin cancers are; American Cancer Society at [www.acs.org](http://www.acs.org) and National Institutes of Health at [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).

**Choose correct canning guidelines**

The food preservation season is here. Be prepared by gathering up-to-date instructions for home canning. Although other preservation methods such as drying and freezing may allow some room for creativity, canning must be done with precision.

Home-canned foods will be safe to eat if you follow research-based instructions exactly. It's especially important to can low-acid foods (meat, fish, poultry, non-pickled vegetables) correctly to avoid botulism, a sometimes fatal food-borne illness. A pressure canner is needed to destroy the bacterial spores.

Home-canning recommendations are developed by researchers in food science laboratories. The type of canner

and length of processing time needed are influenced by several factors including the acidity of the food (or food mixture), the way it's prepared, and the size of the jar.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has been the major source of research-based home-canning instructions. Their recommendations are published in the *Complete Guide to Home Canning*. Copies of this publication may be available for purchase at your local county OSU Extension Office or to view, download and print on the National Center for Home Food Preservation web site at [http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications\\_usda.html](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html).

Extension Services in Oregon, Washington and Idaho have included USDA canning recommendations in their Pacific Northwest food preservation publications, available at your local county OSU Extension Office. Most of these are

also available online. To access them, go to <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation>. Publications are available on canning fruit, vegetables, tomatoes, salsa, meat and poultry, seafood, and smoked fish, as well as pickled vegetables.

The current version of the *Blue Ball Book Guide to Preserving* is also based on USDA recommendations. Only up-to-date editions should be used because home canning recommendations have changed through the years. USDA updated their canning recommendations in 1988 and revised them in 2009.

Don't assume that all home-canning recommendations on the Internet are safe. Be especially wary about personal websites, recipe sites, and cooking exchanges. They may not be based on research.

Source: Carolyn Raab, OSU Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist

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