



Laser Treatment Center

Tips, Advice & Information

Melanoma Awareness

by Dr. Strother

May is melanoma awareness month and we at Laser Treatment Center want to take this opportunity to make sure you are well informed about this potentially deadly form of skin cancer and the steps you can take to minimize your risk.

Melanoma, also called malignant melanoma, is a cancer arising from the pigment producing cells in our skin. It is the third most common form of skin cancer after basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma, but is the leading cause of skin cancer deaths in the United States. This year in the US approximately 60,000 melanomas will be diagnosed and 8,000 people will die from it. Life-time risk of an individual developing melanoma is nearly 1 in 75. Additionally, advanced melanoma remains very difficult to treat despite major medical breakthroughs in the treatment of other cancers. Now here is the good news, early melanomas, which are still thin and limited to the skin, have high cure rates!



So how do you know if you are at risk?

Several classical risk factors for melanoma have been established. These include: previous personal history of melanoma, 2 or more family members with melanoma, numerous moles, and atypical (dysplastic) moles. Additional risk factors include: fair skin, red hair and blue eyes, history of non-melanoma skin cancer, and a history of sunburns or excessive ultraviolet (UV) light exposure (including tanning bed use). Finally, risk increases with age, men have a higher incidence of melanoma than women, and changing or new moles in people over 50 are more likely to be melanoma.



What can you do to reduce your risk?

Sun protection is a good idea, but research suggests we get approximately 80% of our lifetime UV exposure before age 18 and melanoma risk appears more closely related to sun exposure early in life rather than later. Since most of us reading this are at least a little older than 18, it seems we are going to need more than sun screen and hats to



keep us as safe as possible. Evidence shows that regular self skin exams and annual full skin exams by a dermatologist for high risk individuals lead to the diagnosis of thinner, more curable melanomas.

We at Laser Treatment Center offer discrete full skin exams to screen for melanoma and enjoy our chance to teach you self skin exam technique, safe sun practices, and how to recognize the warning signs of melanoma and other skin cancers. Take advantage of Melanoma Awareness Month and schedule your skin exam during May. You just might save your life!

Sincerely,

Dr. Sean Strother

For more information, please contact us the Laser Treatment Center at 425-899-4144 or visit our website at www.kirklandlaser.com