

# Health and Economic Benefits of Skin Cancer Interventions

- Each year in the United States, nearly 6 million people are treated for skin cancer.
- The annual medical costs of treating skin cancer is \$8.9 billion.
- Using proven interventions to prevent skin cancer, especially melanoma, can save money and improve quality of life.



Each year in the United States, an estimated 6.1 million people are treated for [skin cancer](#).<sup>1</sup> and the number of new cases continues to grow.<sup>23</sup>

The most common types of skin cancer—basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma—are usually treatable,<sup>4</sup> but treatment is expensive and can leave scars.<sup>15</sup> Melanoma is the third most common type of skin cancer and is much more deadly.<sup>24</sup>

Most skin cancers are caused by overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun and indoor tanning devices.<sup>4</sup>

- 90,365 new cases of melanoma were diagnosed in 2021, and 8,214 people died of it in 2022.<sup>2</sup>
- About two-thirds of high school students and nearly one-third of adults get sunburned at least once each year.<sup>6</sup>
- Even though use of tanning beds has declined in recent years, about 900,000 high school students<sup>7</sup> and 7.8 million adults<sup>8</sup> continue to engage in this activity.
- Sunburn and use of tanning beds are most common among non-Hispanic White people.<sup>6</sup> This group also has the highest rate of new skin cancer cases.<sup>23</sup>

In the United States, total annual medical costs to treat all types of skin cancer is \$8.9 billion:<sup>A1</sup>

- An estimated 33,826 emergency department visits for sunburn are reported each year,<sup>9</sup> for a total estimated cost of \$11.2 million.<sup>B</sup>
- Prohibiting the use of indoor tanning among minors younger than 18 could prevent an estimated 61,839 melanoma cases and 6,735 melanoma deaths over the lifetime of young people aged 14 or younger in 2013.<sup>10</sup> These reductions could save more than \$342 million<sup>C</sup> in treatment costs.

CDC is working to prevent cancer, detect it early, and improve the health of people with cancer, which can save lives and reduce health care costs. The best way to reduce skin cancer risk is for people to make sun safety an everyday habit and avoid indoor tanning and sun tanning.<sup>4</sup> But outdoor environments and community policies are often not designed with sun safety in mind.

Communities and decision makers can help put proven skin cancer prevention programs into action.<sup>4</sup> For example, they can:

- Increase shade at playgrounds, public pools, and other public spaces.
- Promote sun protection in recreation areas, including selling hats, sunscreen, and sunglasses.
- Encourage employers, childcare centers, schools, and colleges to teach employees and students about sun safety and skin protection.
- Restrict the availability and use of indoor tanning by minors.
- Promote electronic reporting of skin cancers and encourage health care systems and providers to use these systems.

Using proven community skin cancer prevention programs could:

- **INCREASE** use of sun protection, such as seeking shade; wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and long-sleeved shirt; and using broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15.<sup>411</sup>
- **PREVENT** sunburns and premature skin aging and lower the risk of skin cancer by reducing unnecessary sun exposure and sun damage.<sup>411</sup>
- **REDUCE** harms from the use of indoor tanning devices, including skin burns, eye damage, and increased risk of skin cancer.<sup>4</sup>
- **SAVE** an estimated \$250 million<sup>D</sup> a year in health care costs by preventing an estimated 21,000 cases of melanoma by 2030.<sup>12</sup>

CDC leads skin cancer prevention efforts by:

- Using national surveillance data to monitor trends in melanoma cases and deaths and skin cancer risk factors.
- Conducting research to develop and test prevention messages.
- Examining the policy, health system, and environmental factors that influence skin cancer risk behaviors.
- Making sure partners and the public have accurate and timely information about skin cancer prevention and resources to help them put the science of skin cancer prevention into action in their communities.

CDC's [National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program](#) helps programs across the country use proven strategies to improve sun safety as part of its efforts to prevent and control cancer.

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Footnotes

1. Costs were measured in 2018 U.S. dollars.
2. Costs were measured in 2013 U.S. dollars. Older cost estimates are likely to be underestimates.
3. Costs were measured in 2014 U.S. dollars. Older cost estimates are likely to be underestimates.
4. Cost estimates were adjusted to the projected increase in health expenditures from 2011 through 2030.

## References

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