

On your way to a beautiful journey of life when you face a roadblock, we give hope



Skin Cancer Awareness

Summer is just around the corner, and we can't wait to enjoy some time in the sun! But it's also important to discuss the risks of sun exposure, such as skin cancer, as well as treatment options once diagnosed.

Exposure to sunlight (Ultraviolet B) is the most common cause of skin cancer. UV radiation from sunlight and even tanning beds damages the DNA in the top layer of your skin. When this DNA is damaged, it can cause the skin cells to grow out of control and become cancerous.

There are three major types of skin cancer:

1. Basal Cell Carcinoma
2. Squamous Cell Carcinoma
3. Melanoma



Here we will discuss briefly about non-melanoma skin cancer, Basal and Squamous Cell Carcinomas, that can be treated with radiation.

Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) is the most common type of skin cancer. These cancers arise in the basal cells, which line the deepest layer of the epidermis. BCC typically occurs on the face area, where sun exposure is the greatest. It starts out as a pea-size swelling, and as it progresses, it can cause an ulcer or open sore in the central part of the swelling. It can also cause itching or bleeding from the site.

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is the second most common type of skin cancer. These cancers arise in the squamous cells, which make up most of the epidermis. Unlike BCC, SCC can occur in any part of the body including the mucous membranes and genitals but is most common where sun exposure is greatest. One of the major sites of SCC is skin cancer on the ear.

Unlike Melanoma, both Basal and Squamous Cell Carcinomas are highly curable with surgery and/or radiation. If radiation treatment is used, both Squamous and Basal Cell cancers can be cured even without surgery in many cases.

How does radiation therapy work? In radiation therapy, high-energy rays are used to damage cancer cells and stop them from growing and dividing. This radiation causes death of the dangerous cancer cells. A specialist in radiation therapy is called a radiation oncologist. The radiation oncologist supervises treatment and draws out where specifically the radiation beams will be directed.

The main type of radiation used to treat skin cancer is electron beam radiation. Electron beam radiations are the most common types of radiation used to treat skin cancer. Electron beam radiation does not penetrate deep into the skin avoiding overexposure and unnecessary damage.

Radiation therapy treatment is the preferred treatment among elderly patients, especially when skin cancer occurs on the face. For example when skin cancer occurs on the eye lid, surgery is difficult to use and radiation therapy is preferred. Unlike surgery, radiation treatments do not require anesthesia or cutting of the skin. It also has the benefit of offering excellent cosmetic results.

As with all treatment there are side effects, and with radiation therapy, side effects depend on the dose of treatment and the specific part of the body that is treated. The most common side effect of radiation therapy includes redness of the skin, almost as if it were sunburn in areas exposed to the radiation. This side effect is only temporary and diminishes after a few weeks, once radiation treatments are completed.

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with non-melanoma skin cancers or you would like more information regarding radiation treatment, please call the American Cancer Center 847.458.8333 and we will be sure to answer all questions immediately or visit our website accrt.com.

Please remember to protect your skin this summer and enjoy the sun safely!



Actual Skin Cancer Patients before radiation, After radiation

TESTIMONIAL

"Thank you all so much for the wonderful care you took of me during my radiation treatments. Your thoughtfulness and understanding made my visits relaxing and even enjoyable."

- Alynne L.

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