

Our Mission:

To support groundbreaking research that opens new doors to prevention, treatment, and cure of skin diseases and cancer.

To raise awareness and educate the public, particularly children from kindergarten through high school, about the importance of skin and maintaining its health.

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*SKIN*Facts** is a publication of American Skin Association, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to overcoming skin cancer and disease through research and education.

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*): A Germ Attacking the Skin

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) has been in the news a great deal over the past year, as MRSA infections have become more common in the community setting. Staph bacteria (*Staphylococcus aureus*) are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States. MRSA is a germ that is highly resistant to common antibiotics.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the majority of MRSA infections occur in hospitals or other healthcare settings, amongst those persons with weakened immune systems. MRSA bacteria can cause illness outside of healthcare facilities, and is referred to as community-associated MRSA, or CA-MRSA. MRSA infections in the general community can occur in otherwise healthy indi-

viduals and typically present as skin infections that look like pimples, boils, or lesions. They often occur at the site of prior skin trauma or areas covered by hair. The infection can cause pain and discomfort, redness, swelling, and may have pus or drainage. MRSA often begins as a small skin infection, but can spread quickly and if left untreated, can progress into a more serious condition that can affect other parts of the body.

The CDC reports that transmission occurs most frequently by direct skin-to-skin contact. It is also transmitted by contact with contaminated surfaces or shared items that have come into contact with the infection. The best way to prevent MRSA infections is to practice good hygiene. The spread of MRSA

continued on page 4

Prevention:

The CDC recommends several ways to prevent the transmission and spread of MRSA skin infections.

Practice Good Hygiene

Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Shower immediately after participating in exercise.

Keep cuts, abrasions and scrapes clean and covered with a clean, dry bandage until healed.

Avoid contact with other persons' wounds or bandages.

Avoid sharing personal items that come into contact with bare skin (towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, uniforms).

Place a barrier (towel or clothing) between your skin and shared equipment, and wipe surfaces before and after use.

Melanoma and Sun Protection

One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in his or her lifetime, and melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, is occurring in epidemic proportions. The connection between sun exposure and skin cancer has been established, but documenting a direct connection to melanoma has been more difficult and has resulted in numerous debates. Some researchers

have even suggested that sunscreen may increase the risk of melanoma.

Conflicting data can be confusing and frustrating, but knowing the facts about sun exposure is the best defense against skin cancer. It remains a given that the sun produces ultraviolet radiation and that when skin is exposed to the sun's rays, it is damaged. Medical experts agree that ultraviolet radiation

is an important factor in the development of skin cancer. Research studies show that a large number of skin cancers are the result of excessive exposure to sunlight.

Studies confirm that there is no evidence to indicate that sunscreen causes skin cancer or melanoma. It is also well-documented that unprotected sun exposure can lead to premature aging

Focus on Prevention:

Sunscreen Know-How:

◆ **Sunscreen is important to help protect skin from the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays.** ◆
The use of sunscreen on a regular basis helps to decrease the risk of skin cancer. Sunscreen cannot be effective in preventing sun damage unless it is applied correctly and consistently.

Sunscreen typically retains its effectiveness for up to 3 years, but it is sometimes difficult to know when the product was manufactured. If an expiration date isn't available, it is recommended that sunscreen products be **replaced every year to ensure full effectiveness.**

Regardless of skin tone, everyone should wear sunscreen with an **SPF of 15 or higher**, and one that provides **broad-spectrum** coverage which protects against both UVA and UVB rays.

Apply a **generous amount** of sunscreen and coat the skin well and evenly. Studies indicate that the actual SPF is often much lower than thought because many people only apply 1/4 to 1/2 of the amount needed.

Reapply often, at least **every 2 hours** that you remain outside. Reapply **more often if you are in the water or are sweating** a lot. Reapply after being in the water (regardless of a waterproof label) and after toweling off (rubs off prior sun protection.) Products labeled "Waterproof" should provide protection for 80 minutes in the water and those labeled "water-resistant" should provide 40 minutes of protection in the water.

Apply sunscreen **whenever you will be outside.** Sun damage accumulates over time whenever you are exposed to the sun's rays (not just when at the pool or beach!) Be sure to use sun protection even on overcast days since clouds make the sun's rays seem less intense, but they do not filter out harmful UV rays.

Apply sunscreen at least **20-30 minutes** prior to sun exposure.

Be sure to **cover all exposed areas**, remembering ears, nose, feet, behind the neck, under bathing suit straps, around the eye area (carefully and avoiding lids), and scalp protection, especially if thinning or balding (hats are highly recommended, but if one is not available, try a spray-on sunscreen.) It is also important to **protect the lips** by using an SPF 15 lip balm, and the use of **99-100% UVA and UVB-blocking sunglasses** is recommended for eye protection.

Certain medications increase sun sensitivity to UV rays and cause the skin to burn more easily, even when using sunscreen properly. Check with your physician or pharmacist to **make sure that your prescriptions do not increase sun sensitivity.** (Acne medications and antibiotics are the most common.)

To protect your skin from both premature aging and increased risk of skin cancer, it is necessary to limit sun exposure. Try to avoid the sun's peak hours of 10 AM to 4 PM. **Do not use sunscreen as an excuse to stay in the sun longer;** use it to help protect your skin while outside, but **continue to limit your time in the sun.**

(Melanoma)

and skin damage, as well as cancer. The risk increases with the amount and intensity of sun exposure.

Melanoma has been correlated with sunburn, and sunscreen use has been determined to reduce the risk of sunburn. There is also solid evidence that sunscreen reduces the incidence of precancerous skin lesions. Most dermatologists agree that effective sun protection helps to prevent skin cancers, and a majority of dermatologists strongly recommend daily sunscreen use. Premature aging of the skin, which shows up later in life as wrinkled and leathery skin, is avoided by using proper sun protection.

Skin cancer is currently the most common form of cancer in the United States, but it is also the most preventable. While research will continue to explore the effects of sun exposure related to melanoma, studies suggest both the safety and effectiveness of sunscreen use as an important factor in a sun protection plan. Sun damage accumulates over a lifetime, and it is important to understand the risks and to take precautions to decrease related health issues.

Importance of Early Detection

The best treatment for melanoma is early surgical removal. Recognizing the signs listed below is essential to early detection and cure.

Melanoma ABCD's

A Asymmetry

One half of a mole is unlike the other half.

B Border

The edges are irregular, jagged, or blurred.

C Color

The color is not the same all over. It may have differing shades of tan, brown, or black, sometimes with patches of white, red or blue.

D Diameter

The area is greater than a pencil eraser head (6 mm as a rule) or is growing larger.

Year-Round Skin Care

Early Childhood Sun Care

Summer usually means outdoor fun for kids, but if proper sun protection is not provided, it can also mean serious skin damage with long-term effects. It is never too early to begin safe sun care, and it is important to protect children from sun damage and to teach them how to safely enjoy the sunshine. With proper precautions and by developing proper habits early in life, parents can greatly reduce a child's risk of serious skin damage and their chance of developing skin cancer throughout their lifetime.

Proper sun protection should begin with infancy since babies have thinner skin that burns faster and is more easily damaged. It is best to keep infants less than six months of age out of the sun. Many dermatologists recommend that sunscreen should not be applied until a baby is six months old, so it is very important to limit sun exposure as much as possible. Keep babies in the shade and when outside, use wide-brimmed hats, clothing that covers the body, strollers with a hood or shade, and umbrellas. Schedule outdoor time in the early morning or late afternoon, and avoid the sun's peak hours of 10 AM to 4 PM.

Follow the "Sunscreen Know-How" tips for the proper use of sun protection. If you are concerned about sensitive skin or skin allergies, titanium dioxide is a chemical-free sun block which is available as the active ingredient in many products, and you may want to avoid products containing PABA. Unprotected sun exposure is dangerous to all children, but especially for those who have fair skin or light hair, a large number of freckles or moles, or a family history of skin cancer.

It is especially important to remember to use protection *whenever* children will be in the sun, even for a short period of time or on an overcast day. Too much sun may go unnoticed on breezy days when the air cools the skin. Sun exposure accumulates over a lifetime and damage often occurs as a result of unprotected day-to-day activities, and not just during longer periods in the sun or at the pool or beach.

As a parent, teach the importance of sun safety by serving as a role model. Limit your sun exposure and wear sun protection to reduce your own risk of sun damage and skin cancer. By taking simple precautions, everyone can safely enjoy fun in the sun!

MRSA (continued from page 1)

can be prevented by simple measures such as hand washing, covering existing skin trauma and infections, and avoiding any sharing of personal items.

MRSA skin infections can occur in any setting, but certain factors make it easier for the bacteria to be transmitted and have been associated with the spread of MRSA. The CDC identifies five common factors, the **5 C's**, leading to increased risk of MRSA infections: crowded living conditions; close skin-to-skin contact; compromised skin (cuts and abrasions;) contaminated items and surfaces; and lack of cleanliness. In addition to healthcare facilities, common locations where the **5 C's** may occur include schools, college dorms, daycare centers, correctional facilities, military barracks, and gyms, as well as general households.

Most MRSA skin infections can be effectively treated using alternate antibiotics and/or drainage. The CDC reports that more serious infections are rare in healthy individuals. Prompt medical treatment is important to avoid complications, as well as following simple measures to prevent the spread of MRSA to others. Individuals who have an infection and know or live with others who also show signs of infection, should direct them to seek medical attention. To prevent a recurrence, be sure to follow doctor's instructions, as well as steps to prevent further

Factors that make it easier for MRSA to be transmitted:

5 C's

1. **C**rowding
2. **C**ontact (frequent skin-to-skin)
3. **C**ompromised skin (cuts/scrapes)
4. **C**ontaminated items and surfaces
5. **L**ack of **C**leanliness

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

infection. The CDC recommends covering wounds with clean, dry bandages until fully healed, and frequent hand washing, especially after changing bandages or touching the infection. Do not share any personal items, and wash soiled clothes, sheets, and towels with laundry detergent and dry them in a clothes dryer to help kill bacteria.

In most cases, hand hygiene combined with covering infections greatly reduces the risk to others, in addition to cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that may come into contact with poorly covered infections. Typically, it is

not necessary to close schools or other facilities due to an individual infection, however the CDC recommends that consultation with local and/or state public health officials be used to guide decisions, including policies for notification of skin infections.

While the increased incidence of community-associated MRSA may be cause for concern, simple precautions can help to prevent infection. Environmental cleanliness, proper hygiene, and immediate medical attention are the best ways to avoid the transmission and spread of MRSA.

SAVE THE DATE!

American Skin Association 10th Annual Gala

Thursday, October 30, 2008
6:30 PM

The Rainbow Room
New York City

Honorees

Jack Nicklaus
Golf Legend

Harry C. Dietz, MD
Johns Hopkins University

Gavin S. Herbert
Allergan, Inc.

Shinya Yamanaka, MD, PhD
University of Kyoto

Honorary Chairs

Rosemary Harris
Billie Jean King

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(800) 499-SKIN (7546)
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2008 Awards and Grants

RESEARCH SCHOLAR AWARDS



\$75,000 Award
Johann Gudjonsson, MD, PhD
Univ. of Michigan
Psoriasis



\$60,000 Award
Yu-Ying He, PhD
Univ. of Chicago
Melanoma



\$60,000 Award
Jenny Kim, MD, PhD
Univ. of California
Acne Vulgaris

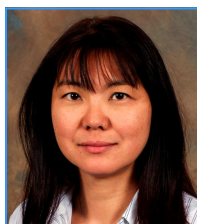


\$60,000 Award
Andrey Sharov, MD, PhD
Boston Univ. School of Medicine
Melanoma

\$15,000 Research Grants



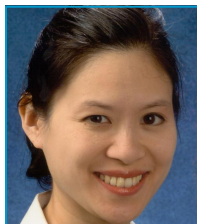
Milan J. Anadkat, MD
Washington Univ.
Psoriasis



Ana Luisa Kadekaro, PhD
Univ. of Cincinnati
Skin Cancer/Melanoma



Pratima Karnik, PhD
Case Western Reserve Univ.
*Autoimmune/Inflammatory
Skin Diseases*



Delphine Lee, MD, PhD
Univ. of California
Vitiligo/Pigment Cell Biology



Laura Y. McGirt, MD
Johns Hopkins Univ.
Skin Cancer/Melanoma



Jane Yoo, MD
Univ. of Washington
Childhood Skin Diseases

\$7,000 Medical Student Grants



Jeremy S. Fenton
New York Univ.
Melanoma



Danielle Levine
Boston Univ.
Melanoma



Kathryn O'Reilly
New York Univ.
Melanoma



Katherine Simon
Columbia Univ.
Melanoma



Grace Sun
MD Anderson Cancer Center
Melanoma

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Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of ASA or its boards. ASA does not endorse any treatments or products.

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2008 Application Deadline

ASA 2008 grant and award guidelines are now available! The deadline for receipt of applications is **Monday, October 6, 2008**. The guidelines can be downloaded from our website at www.americanskin.org or call Joyce Weidler at the ASA office at (212) 889-4858.

Help the ASA support its many important programs!

The ASA annual membership of \$25 entitles you to receive *SKINFacts*, free brochures, and invitations to special events. More importantly, you will be helping to support critical research and education on skin disorders and cancer.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED