

PROTECT YOUR Skin



May is National Skin Cancer Awareness Month

story by Susan Ruddiman photo by John Stricklin

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is a mecca for outdoor activities from bicycling to golfing and from deep sea fishing to building sandcastles. The sun-filled days also mean the area is above average on the ultraviolet (UV) index which means skin damaging radiation exposure.

The Coast's average UV exposure is at 6 on a scale of 11 with the national average at 4.3.

"We are in a high risk area with sun exposure year round," said Jason A. Payne, M.D., a board certified general surgeon at South Mississippi Surgeons. Anyone who has received a sunburn is at

risk of developing skin cancer of some type years later.

"You won't see effects immediately. It's not until we get in our 30s, 40s and 50s that these little things start popping up from all the damage done early on in life," Payne said. "Prevention is the key."

As a parent, Payne said it's not easy, but he applies sunscreen to his children and then reapplies it later. He makes sure they take breaks, seek shade and cover up when possible.

"No one should sit out there and



JASON A. PAYNE, M.D.

bake. Even tanning beds still have UV radiation hitting you. That's what does the damage," he said.

Any suspicious place on sun exposed areas such as the arms, legs, backs and heads usually is biopsied. If it comes back cancerous, any of the physicians at South Mississippi Surgeons are qualified to remove the lesions. Most of the procedures can be done in the office with little disruption to the patient's daily routine.

"Schedule an appointment with us for an evaluation. It's best to get these areas checked sooner rather than later," Payne said.

The ABCDE signs of skin cancer:

Source: skincancer.org

	A Asymmetry	B Border	C Color	D Diameter	E Evolving
NORMAL	 Symmetrical	 Borders Are Even	 One Color	 Smaller Than 1/4 Inch	 Ordinary Mole
MELANOMA	 Asymmetrical	 Borders Are Uneven	 Multiple Colors	 Larger Than 1/4 Inch	 Changing in Size, Shape and Color

- **Asymmetry** – The benign mole is symmetrical while the questionable one will not have two sides matching.
- **Border** – The edges of an early melanoma tend to be uneven.
- **Color** – If a mole has a number of different colors, it could be a warning sign.
- **Diameter** – Cancerous moles are usually larger.
- **Evolve** – Be alert if a mole has started to change in size, shape, color, elevation or it bleeds or itches.



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