



Skin Cancer Risks Include The Feet

(NAPSA)—For maximum protection against the growing threat of malignant melanoma, don't overlook the most misdiagnosed and fatal site of the disease—your feet.

The American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons warns that melanoma is the most common malignancy on the foot or ankle and more likely to be misdiagnosed than melanoma on any other part of the body. It often is detected late, as a result, dropping its survival rate far lower than for melanomas found elsewhere.

“Unfortunately, increased public awareness about skin cancer risk usually doesn't include the lower limbs, therefore, suspicious skin abnormalities on the feet aren't noticed as easily as on the face or upper body,” said Neil Campbell, DPM, FACFAS, a Texas podiatric surgeon.

“A non-painful spot on the foot, especially the sole, often isn't noticed until advanced stages when a tumor is thicker and more likely to spread,” he added. “Any change in an existing mole or pigmented skin abrasion on the foot should be evaluated by a podiatric surgeon right away.”

Campbell said melanomas can be found anywhere on the foot, including under a toenail, and most often appear as abnormal looking moles or small areas of pigmented skin. To guard against foot melanoma, he advises putting sunscreen on the top and bottom of the feet and limiting sun exposure.

Cases of malignant melanoma are increasing faster than any



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other cancer in America and some 40,000 new cases are diagnosed every year. A 2003 study published in the *Journal of Foot & Ankle Surgery* reported the overall survival rate for melanoma of the foot or ankle is just 52 percent, in sharp contrast to the 85 percent survival rate for patients with melanomas on other areas of the body.

Risk factors may be similar to other skin cancers, such as excessive unprotected time in the sun, family history, numerous moles on the body and having fair skin, blue eyes or red hair. However, those normally at low risk for skin cancer, such as African Americans, Hispanics and Asians, can develop melanomas on their feet.

For further information about various foot conditions and to locate a podiatric surgeon in your area, visit www.FootPhysicians.com.