

Melanoma

Melanoma in the U.S.

Melanoma incidence increased faster than any other cancer in the 1970's and 1980's. It is now the 5th most common cancer among U.S. men and the 7th most common cancer among U.S. women. According to the 1998 American Cancer Society, *Cancer Facts & Figures*, an estimated 41,600 cases of melanoma were diagnosed in the U.S. and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) reports that 7,431 people died from this disease. Whites get melanoma ten times as often as African Americans and five times as often as Hispanics. Melanoma is the most common cancer in U.S. men aged 35-44 years and the second most common cancer, after breast cancer, in women from this age group. Incidence around the world varies a hundred-fold with the highest rates among Whites in Australia and the lowest rates in parts of Asia.

The most important thing people can do to reduce their chances of getting melanoma is to avoid sun exposure.

Risk Factors for Melanoma

There are several factors that may increase a person's chance of getting melanoma:

- Family history of melanoma
- Large number of moles (nevi)
- Presence of atypical moles (dysplastic nevi)
- Intermittent blistering sunburns, especially in childhood and adolescence
- Skin that burns easily, tans poorly or freckles

Prevention of Melanoma

The most important thing people can do to reduce their chances of getting melanoma is to:

- Avoid being outside in mid-day hours
- Use sunscreen
- Wear hats and long sleeves when in the sun

Early Detection of Melanoma

Why is early detection important?

- Cases detected early (local disease) have about a 96% chance of living for at least five more years.
- Cases detected at the distant stage (when disease has spread to another part of the body) have only a 14% chance of living for five more years.

How to Improve your Chances of Detecting Melanoma Early

Talk to your health care provider about **regular skin exams if you have any of the following:**

- Many moles on your skin
- A history of dysplastic nevi (atypical moles)
- Family members with melanoma or dysplastic nevi
- A history of melanoma

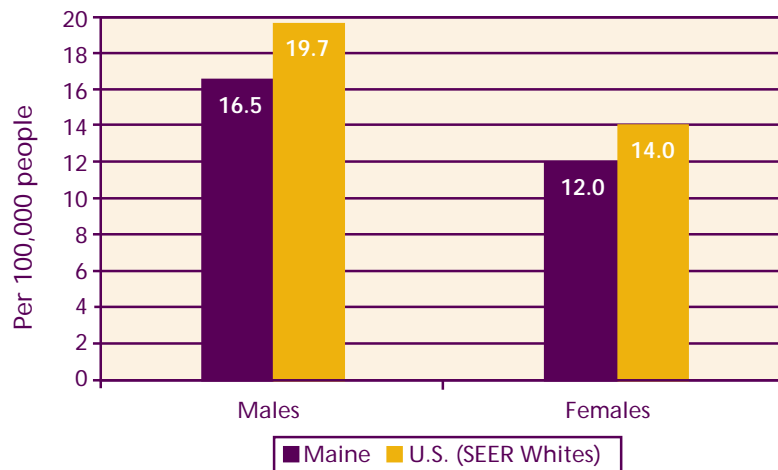
If you have a **mole that is changing** (for example in size or color or sensation) see your health care provider.

Burden of Melanoma in Maine

- On average 121 men and 102 women each year were diagnosed with melanoma between 1997 and 1998.
- 24 men and 15 women each year died from melanoma on average.
- In Maine, 52% of melanoma cases are diagnosed in people under age 60.

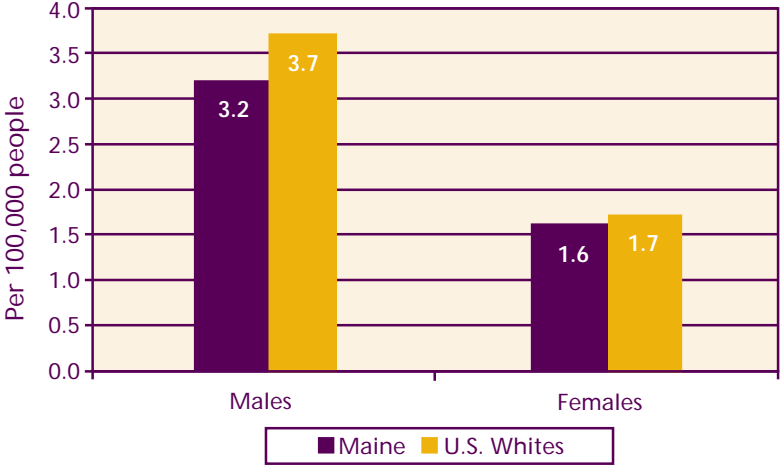
The age-adjusted incidence rate for melanoma was statistically lower (less cases) in Maine men than in the U.S. This may be due to underreporting of cases diagnosed outside the hospital or the fact that melanoma is less common in northern U.S.

Age-Adjusted Incidence Rates by Sex, Maine and U.S.
Melanoma, 1997-1998



The age-adjusted mortality rates for melanoma in Maine were not statistically different from the U.S. for both males and females.

Age-Adjusted Mortality Rates by Sex, Maine and U.S. Melanoma, 1997-1998



Melanomas frequently occur in young people, including teenagers.

Maine Age-Specific Incidence Rates Melanoma, 1997-1998

