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Older Americans Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Week, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer, and its incidence is rising. Fortunately, it is also the most preventable form of cancer and the easiest to detect early and treat successfully. The risk of developing skin cancer increases throughout adult life, with the highest incidence occurring among people over 50.

There are two basic types of skin cancer: the common basal cell and squamous cell cancers, and the less common but far more serious type called melanoma. More than 400,000 new cases of nonmelanoma skin cancer are diagnosed in the United States each year. These cancers have a high cure rate, especially with early detection and prompt treatment. Most can be treated in the doctor's office.

Occurrence of nonmelanoma skin cancers varies directly with exposure to ultraviolet light from the sun (and "sun lamps" of various kinds), and indirectly with skin pigmentation. Older Americans can reduce their risk of skin cancer by avoiding excessive exposure to sunlight, particularly if they are fair-skinned; by avoiding exposure during the 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. hours; by wearing protective clothing; and by using sunscreen lotions and ointments. Prudent avoidance of too much sunlight is fully compatible with enjoyment of the great outdoors.

Older Americans may mistake the signs of skin cancer for normal skin changes due to aging, and they should be alert to these signs. Many skin growths are noncancerous, but any new growth on the skin, or a sore that does not heal, should promptly be brought to a doctor's attention. Skin cancer has many different appearances, but it occurs most frequently on sun-exposed areas of the body.

Melanoma is a far more serious health problem, but it also is highly curable when detected and treated early. About 23,000 new cases will be diagnosed this year. Melanoma is also related to exposure to ultraviolet light but not as directly as nonmelanoma skin cancers. Older Americans should be alert for changes in the size or color of a mole or rapid darkening, ulceration or scaliness or changes in the shape or outline of a mole, or development of a new pigmented lesion or bulge in a normal skin area. These are some of the most common signs that may signal melanoma, and a doctor should be consulted without delay.

The American Academy of Dermatology and other dermatologic organizations are committed to educating the public about all types of skin cancers. This year marks the Second Annual National Melanoma and Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Program, a coordinated national effort of professional dermatologic organizations to reduce the increasing incidence of skin cancers and to better control these cancers by prompt diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 267, has designated the week of May 26 through June 1, 1986, as "Older Americans Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Week" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of May 26 through June 1, 1986, as Older Americans Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Week, and I invite all Americans to observe the week with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and tenth.

Ronald Reagan