

Some melanoma survivors still use tanning beds, skip sunscreen

April 9 2013

Although most survivors of melanoma take precautions to protect their skin from the sun and further occurrences of cancer, data presented at the AACR Annual Meeting 2013, held in Washington, D.C., April 6-10, revealed that more than a quarter do not use sunscreen when outside for more than an hour, and more than 2 percent still use tanning beds.

"We know that melanoma is a malignancy prevalent in our population, and we know that for many people with melanoma, sun exposure is a major risk factor for recurrence and sun protection may reduce their chances of getting melanoma again," said Anees B. Chagpar, M.D., M.P.H., associate professor of surgery at Yale School of Medicine, in New Haven, Conn., and director of the [Breast Center](#) at Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven. "Although we found that melanoma survivors did better than the general public at protecting their skin from the sun, we also found that more than a quarter of melanoma survivors never wear sunscreen. That blew my mind."

Chagpar and colleagues evaluated data from the 2010 National [Health Interview Survey](#), an annual, cross-sectional survey of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of the United States that asks questions on a wide range of health topics. They focused on data collected on self-reported history of melanoma, sun protection practices and [indoor tanning](#).

Of 27,120 adults, 171 had a prior history of melanoma. Researchers found that compared with those individuals who reported no history of

melanoma, survivors were more likely to stay in the shade (15.6 percent versus 10.5 percent of the general population) and wear a baseball cap/visor (31.3 percent versus 18.4 percent), wide-brimmed hat (20.5 percent versus 6.1 percent) and/or long-sleeved shirt (12 percent versus 5.2 percent) when outside on a warm, sunny day for more than an hour. They were also more likely to always wear sunscreen (32 percent versus 17.2 percent).

However, 15.4 percent of melanoma survivors still reported rarely or never staying in the shade, 27.3 percent reported never wearing sunscreen when going outside on a warm, sunny day for more than an hour (compared with 35.4 percent of the general population), and 2.1 percent reported using a tanning bed during the previous year (compared with 5.5 percent of the general population).

"We now know that a significant proportion of melanoma survivors still could be doing better. This study speaks to what we could do to educate [melanoma](#) survivors on how to prevent recurrence," Chagpar said.

In addition, she recommended researchers use the data to educate the [general population](#), as the results revealed that only 17.2 percent of Americans will always use sunscreen and 5.5 percent still use [tanning beds](#).

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

Citation: Some melanoma survivors still use tanning beds, skip sunscreen (2013, April 9) retrieved 12 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-04-melanoma-survivors-tanning-beds-sunscreen.html>

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