

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Basal Cell Carcinoma

Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common form of skin cancer in the United States. An estimated 2.8 million are diagnosed annually in the United States.¹ This type of cancer is most common in people over age 40 but can occur in younger people at high risk.³ BCC is a slow-growing skin cancer, rarely resulting in metastasis beyond the original tumor site or death. History of long-term sun exposure puts anyone at risk. Individuals with light-colored or freckled skin, blue, green, or grey eyes, blonde or red hair, many moles and a family history of skin cancer are at the highest risk of developing BCC. Signs of BCC include a skin bump or growth pink or white in color with a pearly or waxy covering that bleeds, oozes, or crusts persistently. ²

If an unusual spot and bump appears on your skin make sure to reach out to your physician or local pharmacist for more information about basal cell carcinoma. Skin biopsy must be done to confirm BCC.³ Upon confirmation a treatment regimen will be developed. Treatment plan depends on the size, depth, location of the cancer, and your overall health. Treatment options may involve excision, electrodesiccation, cryosurgery, radiation, and medications. Curettage and electrodesiccation involves scraping away cancerous cells and using electricity to kill any that remain. Cryosurgery kills cell by freezing them.² Drug treatments include Imiquimod, 5-Fluorouracil, and Erivedge. Drug therapy is usually reserved for BCC that has metastasized or locally advanced BCC that becomes life-threatening.³

BCCs are potentially curable when detected and treated early, but it is best to prevent them in the first place.² BCC are the direct result of skin damage due to the sun, or other sources of damaging radiation such as from UV tanning beds. Seek the shade if you can, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM,

and never use UV tanning beds. Wide brim hats and comfortable clothing that covers your skin reduces your risk significantly.

Use of a broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day will decrease sun damage. For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant, broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. It is recommended to apply 1 ounce of sunscreen to your entire body 30 minutes before going outside. Ask your pharmacist about which products will be best for you. Examine your skin head-to-toe regularly, and talk to your doctor every year about a skin exam. Incorporating these sun safety habits will greatly decrease the risk of developing BCC.³

People who have had one BCC diagnosis are at risk of developing others over the years, either in the same area or elsewhere on the body. Therefore self-examinations should be put into one's routine.¹ Sunscreen use becomes essential for these people with a prior diagnosis of a BCC when sun exposure can't be avoided.

References:

1. "Basal Cell Carcinoma." Basal Cell Carcinoma. Web. 31 Mar. 2015. <<https://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/diseases-and-treatments/a---d/basal-cell-carcinoma>>.
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3. "Skin Cancer Foundation." Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC). Web. 31 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/basal-cell-carcinoma>>.

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.