

MEDICAL

BRIEFS

Alzheimer help

Alzheimer Activities Service presents "Healing the Wounds of Alzheimer's Disease," a presentation on non-drug activity therapy...

Female Incontinence

The Oakwood Healthcare System will present free seminars, "You Don't Have To Lose Control" at the following times and locations...

Brain tumor conference

Henry Ford Hospital's Hermelin Brain Tumor Center and the American Brain Tumor Association will sponsor a two-day conference...

Dangerous Rays

Beauty may be only skin deep... but cancer often goes deeper



By RENEE SKOGLUND STAFF WRITER rskoglund@oe.homecomm.net

According to the American Academy of Dermatologists, 1.3 million Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer this year...

Excessive exposure to the sun - particularly sunburns - is the most preventable cause of melanomas, which starts in the melanocytes...

Dr. David Blum, a dermatologist with the St. Joseph Mercy Health System and an instructor in the Department of Dermatology at Wayne State University...

Women generally detect a melanoma earlier because they are more observant of their bodies, said Blum. They notice lesions one-twelfth to one-tenth of an inch. Not so with men.

Research has shown that 80 percent of a person's lifetime sun damage occurs before the age of 18, a significant portion of which occurs during peak sun hours and in the summer.

Early education about the dangers of too much sun pays off, said Uley. Since Australia began an aggressive skin-cancer awareness campaign among kindergarten and elementary school children several years ago...

"I'm seeing a tremendous number of young people in their thirties just fighting with basal cell cancers," said Uley. "It used to be people in their late fifties, sixties and seventies."

Drivers whose daily routes involve full-face sun exposure for extended periods of time also are at risk for skin cancer, not only on their face, but on their left forearm if they're right-handed...

Learn to battle the rays

In theory, an SPF-15 sunscreen would allow a fair-skinned person to remain in the sun 15 times the 20 or 30 minutes it would take for that person to burn without sunscreen.

- Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest.
■ Wear long pants and shirts with sleeves.
■ Wear a hat with a 4-inch brim to protect your face and neck.
■ Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen every day and start putting it on your kids at age 6 months.

According to the survey, 53 percent of parents reported applying a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher as their most frequently used sun-protection behavior.

However, the children using sunscreen spent an average of nearly 22 percent more time in the sun on a weekend than children who were not using sunscreen.

Myths

- If I remain in the shade, I won't burn. Wrong. Fifty percent of the sun's rays bounce off the horizon or the ground and invade your shade.
■ I can't get a burn on a cloudy day. Yes, you can! Approximately 70 percent of the sun's UV rays come through on an overcast day.
■ A hat will protect me. It helps, but you still soak up 60 percent of the sun's rays.

Who want your health news? There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous venues for you to offer news...

Recognize the signs of skin cancer in time

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, the lifetime chance of getting skin cancer is 1 in 6. There's a link at the three forms of skin cancer: their characteristics, risk factors, and treatments.
Basal cell carcinoma: Basal cell carcinoma is the most common form of skin cancer, accounting for 80 percent of all skin cancers diagnosed in the country.
Squamous cell carcinoma: Squamous cell carcinoma is the second-most common skin cancer, representing 16 percent of all skin cancers.
Melanoma: Also called "malignant" melanomas, this is the most dangerous form of skin cancer...