

Preventing Pediatric Melanoma



Melanoma accounts for up to three percent of all pediatric cancers. Ninety percent of pediatric melanoma cases occur in girls aged 10-19. Between 1973 and 2001, melanoma incidence in those under 20 rose 2.9 percent. As a result, more parents may want to practice preventive measures.

The Aflac Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is committed to educating parents about how to safeguard their children against the dangers of melanoma. One important step parents can take is to teach their children the shadow rule: When you are outside, if your shadow is shorter than you are, it means UV rays are intense and you need to be extra careful. However long their shadow is, children should always apply sunscreen on their whole bodies with SPF 30 half an hour before spending time in the sun; It should also have "broad-spectrum coverage" on the bottle. You should put more on every 90 minutes or after sweating or swimming. If your child is swimming, use water-resistant sunscreen.

Parents should also learn the warning signs of melanoma:

- Asymmetrical moles
- A mole or lesion that has irregular edges
- The color of a cancerous spot is generally black or brown
- The diameter is generally bigger than a pencil eraser.

While it's important to recognize these warning signs, parents should also know that about half of all children with melanoma do not follow this pattern. A significant number of pediatric melanomas have well-defined edges and are light in color. This discrepancy can contribute to a serious delay in a child being diagnosed. That's why it's so important for parents to report any suspicious growths to their child's pediatrician. When identified early, melanoma is 100 percent curable. Left untreated, this type of cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

Provided by Dr. Louis Rapkin of the Aflac Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

About Tips Provider

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, one of the leading pediatric healthcare systems in the country, is pleased to offer summer tips for parents and their children. For more tips on a variety of subjects, go to www.choa.org/healthandsafetytips. Children's experts are also available for interviews pertaining to these topics, as well as additional pediatric health care issues. Please contact Children's 24-hour, 7-day-a-week media pager at 404-570-9717 to reach a public relations representative immediately.

Aflac Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service of Children's

The Aflac Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is a national leader among childhood cancer, hematology, and blood and marrow transplant programs, serving infants to young adults. Recognized as one of the top childhood cancer centers in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*, the Aflac Cancer Center treats more than 400 new cancer patients each year and follows more than 1,700 patients with sickle cell disease, hemophilia and other blood disorders. Visit www.aflaccancercenter.org or call 404-785-1112 or 888-785-1112 for more information.