

# This Skin Cancer Awareness Month, VA Encourages Women Veterans to Take Steps to Prevent Skin Cancer



Summer is around the corner, which means you might be spending more time outside. While enjoying the warmer weather, it's important to protect yourself from the sun to prevent skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S. The most common types of skin cancer are basal cell and squamous cell cancer. Melanoma is less common but more deadly.

Nearly 24,000 women are diagnosed with melanoma each year. The rate at which young women develop melanoma has more than doubled in the past 30 years. The good news is that skin cancer is often preventable. During Skin Cancer Awareness Month this May, VA wants you to take steps to protect yourself from skin cancer and learn how to identify possible signs.

## Risk Factors and Symptoms

While anyone can get skin cancer, [people with the following risk factors](#) are more likely to develop it:

- A lighter natural skin color
- Skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily, or becomes painful in the sun
- Blue or green eyes
- Blond or red hair
- Certain types of moles or many moles
- A family history of skin cancer
- A personal history of skin cancer

Changes in your skin can be a sign of skin cancer. Moles that have changed appearance can be the first sign of melanoma.

## Ways to Protect Yourself

To prevent skin cancer, you should:

- Use sunscreen with an SPF 15 or higher
- Wear clothing that covers skin when possible
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat
- Use sunglasses that block UVA and UVB rays
- Stay in the shade, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest
- Avoid tanning beds

You should discuss any skin changes with your VA provider. Your provider will also be able to discuss risk factors and explain ways to prevent skin cancer. Learn more about signs, risk factors, and protective measures [here](#).