



## **Melanoma Updates 2021**

### **The Importance of Screening for Skin Cancers**

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Dr. Meredith McKean: Screening for skin cancer is important at every stage of our lives. In general, children should be, you should be watching their skin, but it's really most important, important to start skin cancer screening at age 18. At that point, you know, every patient is recommended to have annual skin checks, full skin exam, whether that's with a primary care provider or with the dermatologist to make sure that there's a close skin exam performed. The importance of this is that allows opportunity for a provider to be able to follow lesions with time. There's a number of different technologies that are that are being evaluated to best assess lesions and to not have to remove every lesion. There is different mapping and different research opportunities, taking a look at how best to follow patients that have skin lesions, especially patients that are at higher risk.

So, this skin cancer screening should be performed for every adult patients after they've been diagnosed with skin cancer, whether that is melanoma squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, those patients should follow even more closely with a dermatologist. There's oftentimes protocols you know, for example, after a diagnosis of melanoma, patients should be followed every three months for a certain period of time. And then those visits are decreased in frequency. So that may mean every six months followed by once a year at a certain time period. The important part about a skin exam is to be able to identify A, any concerning precancerous lesions that can be removed, watched, taken care of, and then de-identify any cancerous lesions at an early stage. We know with any skin cancer melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, the best treatment is early identification and surgical resection.

If you look at the outcomes for patients with stage one melanoma or early stage squamous or basal cell carcinoma, you can see that definitive therapy with surgery leads to great overall outcomes. And that's the main reason for doing those skin exams is that early treatment. Now I encourage patients that have been diagnosed with skin cancer to



continue to you know, apply sunscreen, good sun prevention habits, and also to encourage that for their family members because they also likely have similar genetic features that may predispose them to sun damage or other skin cancers. So patients that have been diagnosed with a skin cancer, I encourage them to have all first degree family members also undergo annual skin exams. It's a good recommendation in general, but I think it reinforces the importance for them to make sure that they're getting their skin checked every year.