

## Skin Cancer Changed Our Lives

Skin cancer changed our lives as a family. May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month. This is something I know about from personal experience. I wanted to share with you about our struggle as a family.

The two men that I love the most in this world have been diagnosed with skin cancer. My husband, Chuck, has battled with skin cancer our entire married life. He has undergone numerous Mohs Micrographic Surgeries at least twice a year. Chuck visits his dermatologists every three months to be examined for any new cancerous spots. My husband is light hair colored and fair skinned. When Chuck was a boy, he lived on a farm in High Hill and played outside all day long without a shirt on. He never used sun block. Chuck never thought skin cancer could happen to him.

Even when I was in high school, I grew up near the beach, my friends and I used baby oil and iodine to get a tan faster. We cooked all day long out in the sun. I have always been an outdoors person, swimming, lifeguarding, kayaking and bicycling, and I still am. But it is not the same. Some of the things, I enjoy in life are gone. Today, fear is always lurking in the back of my mind when we are outside as a family. Last year, my Dad was diagnosed with melanoma.

So, during Skin Cancer Awareness Month, I wanted to remind you to protect yourself from the sun, which can damage skin in as little as 15 minutes. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Even if it is a cool and cloudy day, you still need protection.

Take precautions against sun exposure every day of the year, especially during midday hours of (10 AM to 4 PM) when ultraviolet (UV) rays are strongest and do the most damage. UV rays can reach you on cloudy days, and can reflect off of surfaces like water, cement and sand.

The Montgomery County Health Department recommends these precautions:

- 1). Seek shade, especially during midday hours;
- 2). Cover up with clothing to protect exposed skin;
- 3). Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears and neck;
- 4). Wear sunglasses that wrap around and block as many rays as possible;
- 5). Put on sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher;
- 6). Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps. The UV rays from them are as dangerous as the UV rays from the sun.

Skin cancer changed our lives; do not let it change yours. ■