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## Skin Cancer Prevention and Surveillance Check-Ups

At Dermatology Associates of Wisconsin, S.C., we treat thousands of skin cancers each year and are the largest skin cancer treatment practice in Wisconsin. We strive to give you the best possible treatment. The treatment selected should eliminate your skin cancer completely and minimize the risk of the original cancer coming back. However, your chances of developing another skin cancer are much greater. For patients that have Basal cell carcinoma or a Squamous cell carcinoma, the chances of you getting a new skin cancer is 50% within 5 years. Those who have had a melanoma have a 12-14% chance of getting a new skin cancer. The risk is even higher for patients who have had multiple skin cancers or are immunosuppressed. Many lesions can be detected as a precancer (actinic keratosis) and easily treated with liquid nitrogen (sprayed) to prevent the need for surgery in the future.

It is essential for you take appropriate sun protective measures and have regular skin examinations, especially when you notice suspicious growths. Skin examinations should be done every three months for the first two years after surgery. Thereafter, it is recommended to get a skin check every six months for the next five years. After five years, if you have not had another skin cancer or any precancerous growths, we suggest getting a skin exam once a year.

If you have had a skin cancer, precancers (actinic keratosis), or have many atypical moles then it is very important for you to practice sun safety and protect your skin. The sun damage that you have accumulated over the course of your lifetime will always be there and cannot be reversed, but there are many good studies that demonstrate that starting sun protection at any age can reduce further risk of skin cancer.

**Sunscreen**- If you are going to be outside for more than 20 or 30 minutes you should apply sunscreen of SPF number 15 or higher. Sunscreen only lasts 2-3 hours and should be reapplied every 2 hours if you are spending the day in the sun. Also sunscreen is not "waterproof" even if it says so on the bottle—if you go swimming you need to reapply sunscreen after you come out of the pool.

**Protective Clothing**- Wearing a broad brimmed hat protects most of your face, ears, and neck. Keeping your shirt on also helps to protect your shoulders and back. Baseball hats only protect your forehead and aren't very good protection.

**Daily Sunscreen Moisturizer**- There are many very nice daily sunscreen moisturizers with SPF 15 available. They all rub in well and do not leave you with a greasy feeling like the thicker sunscreens. It is a very good habit to get into to use them on a daily basis all year round. UVA light which is a major factor in causing skin cancer and aging of the skin is present all year round from morning to evening at a relatively constant level. UVA doesn't cause burning so we commonly don't think about the damage it causes.

If you have had a skin cancer, pre-cancers, or atypical moles then, in addition to your regular dermatologist check ups, be sure to check yourself on a monthly basis for spots that are growing, bleeding, get a scab on them, or are changing in any way. Skin cancers are always easier to take off when they are little than when they are big.