

skin cancer THE NEW SILENT KILLER

Mary Katherine Grant was a successful 68-year-old career woman who managed hospitals with hundreds of people, traveled the world, enjoyed golfing, and loved spending time in the sun.

The latter is what took her life.

We've heard it all before: Don't talk to strangers, be careful when alone at night, smoking isn't good for you... but never "the sun can kill you!" Our family, like thousands of other families, learned the hard way: it can. And now, with all the talk about the disappearing ozone layer and environmental/global warming, there is a desperate need for much more awareness of the dangers of the sun, and skin cancer.

I wish my aunt realized the dangers before skin cancer cut her life short.

When we think of the effects of the sun's rays on our skin, we usually think about the exposed areas of our bodies and our face. Those dreaded signs of aging we begin to see in our 30s, as well as the pain of a good sunburn, immediately come to mind. But the effects of the sun on the scalp are rarely considered, if at all.

This easily overlooked area of skin, hidden by a full head of hair, is where it started for my aunt.

After her hairdresser told her of a small, irregularly-shaped mole hidden by her hair, my aunt visited her dermatologist for a checkup. The news was grim: cancerous melanoma. After more visits to her dermatologist, and then many more skin experts, my aunt was diagnosed with STAGE 4 skin cancer – the final stage immediately before the terminal phase, Stage 5. There was little all those specialists could do. She had no previous symptoms. No pain. No weakness. My aunt felt great, looked even better and traveled the country weekly. But, she was rapidly dying.

After multiple surgeries over three years, various expensive medications and treatments, the cancer spread deeper into her skin, into the dermis. The specialists tried to stay ahead of the aggressive cancer by removing the cancerous areas, including a four inch by four inch plate of her skull, but by then the cancer had spread throughout her body. It attacked her lymph glands, her bone, her brain. She suffered a stroke that rendered her left side unusable. On a Wednesday afternoon, my aunt took herself to the hospital complaining of a headache. She slipped into a coma. Three days later, my aunt died from a silent killer – that started from a small, almost unnoticed mole. She died from skin cancer.

My aunt was one of the estimated 10,710 people in 2006 who passed away as a result of skin cancer.

Once she was diagnosed, there was nothing I could do to help my aunt, but I can help my clients, others, and myself by bringing this subject to the forefront. As a



professional esthetician, I make it my business to look and make suggestions to my clients. Along with a qualified dermatologist, I can help in the prevention of skin cancer one person at a time.

Don't wait until your hairdresser finds a mole. Visit a qualified dermatologist today. They will check you for irregular skin conditions, and instruct you how to do the same at home – it could save your life. Make an appointment to see a dermatologist and have your entire body checked regularly. Learn the ABCD's of melanoma and spread the word (A-Asymmetry, B-Border, C-Color, D-Diameter). Awareness, education and early detection are our best defense. Most importantly, ALWAYS WEAR SUNSCREEN!

For more information and to make a donation, please check out the skin cancer foundation at: www.skincancer.org

Michelle G. Bouse, celebrity make-up artist & licensed esthetician. For more information call 877.691.8647 or go to <http://www.michellebouse.com>

studies have shown that sunlight is actually prevent certain cancers (lung, colon, breast and diabetes, multiple sclerosis and asthma. However, you can often get too much of a good thing. You must be careful when you go outdoors. If you want to prevent skin cancer, it is very important to follow these steps:

1) Wear a hat with two to three-inch brim and wear long-sleeved shirt and pants

woven fabrics like denim are better than loose cotton or linen. Wearing a hat and protective clothing is more effective than using a sunscreen according to studies. This is especially important for those people who are fair-skinned, turn red after 10 minutes of sun exposure, who have 100 moles and who have a family history of skin cancer either self or family. Look for clothing that are made from sun-protective fabrics. There is also a laundry additive that has a UV protectant which can be used to wash clothes with.

2) Apply sunscreen properly 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors.

Cover the exposed parts of your body thoroughly with the right sunscreen. Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Apply sunscreen on cloudy days because 80% of the sun's UV rays get through the clouds. Also protect your lips by using a lip balm that has sunscreen with an SPF of 15. Re-apply sunscreen every two hours while outdoors, especially after swimming and if you sweat heavily.

3) Try not to stay outdoors more than 30 minutes during the peak hours when the sun's rays are strongest which is from 10 am to 4 pm.

4) The best sunscreen, however, is an antioxidant sunscreen built with nutrition.

Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables to boost your skin's natural UV protection (take 30 days of nutrition to boost skin levels). Add to your diet that are rich in carotenoids such as beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein, and zeaxanthin. Carotenoids are powerful antioxidants and protect against skin-damaging UV rays.

5) Do a monthly skin exam.

Did you know that skin cancers can develop in parts of your body that are not exposed to the sun? Look for moles, spots or freckles that are asymmetric, have an irregular border, change in color and are more than 6 millimeters (the size of a pencil eraser). See a dermatologist if you find a mole, freckles or spots that look suspicious.

6) If you take medications,

be aware that some medications such as antibiotics, diuretics, antidepressants and over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like Aleve and Advil can make your skin more vulnerable to sun damage.