



MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM OF EAST TEXAS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Memorial Health System of East Texas Creates Awareness about Melanoma

LUFKIN, TEXAS (June 2, 2009)... With summer upon us and more outdoor activity opportunities, Memorial Health System of East Texas reminds everyone about the importance of skin protection from sunburn and ultraviolet (UV) light exposure. Though melanoma is not the most common type of skin cancer – basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma predominate, melanoma is the leading cause of skin cancer related death.

The American Cancer Society estimates that the United States will have almost 69,000 new cases of melanoma and over 8,600 deaths from melanoma in 2009.

Several risk factors increase a person's chance of getting melanoma skin cancer. They are:

- UV (ultraviolet) light exposure for extended amounts of time
- Moles that have signs of the *ABCD rule* described below
- Fair skin individuals, especially those with freckles or red or blond hair
- Family history of melanoma
- Past history of melanoma
- Weakened immune system

The *ABCD rule* helps you identify a normal mole from a more serious abnormal mole. Always see a doctor if any moles show these signs:

- Asymmetry: The mole does not look the same on both halves.
- Border irregularity: The mole edges are ragged, blurred or notched and are not smooth.
- Color: The mole color varies and is not consistent. It may be shades of tan, brown or black and sometimes patches of pink, red, blue or white.
- Diameter: The mole is larger than about ¼ inch (the size of a pencil eraser).

Skin cancer prevention consists of four key ways you can protect yourself. “Slip! Slop! Slap! and Wrap!” is a beneficial catch phrase to remind us about the proper protection from UV light. Slip on a long sleeve shirt, slop on a palm full of sunscreen, slap on a wide brim hat and wrap your eyes with UV absorption sunglasses. Protect yourself and your children using this method along with staying in the shade during the middle of the day and avoiding tanning beds and sun lamps. If you like the tanned look, try sunless tanning lotions.

Melanoma is curable if found in the early stages. Many times melanoma begins on the legs and feet. If undetected, melanoma can spread to other areas of the body making treatment and cure rates more difficult. According to Dr. Sidney Roberts, radiation oncologist and Medical Director of the Arthur Temple Sr. Regional Cancer Center, Melanoma can occur on any portion of the body, and even places that do not get sun exposure. “People should follow the ABCD rule and keep a watch on moles and report any suspicious lesions to their doctor,” said Dr. Roberts. “If detected early, melanoma can be cured.”

According to the Texas Cancer Registry, the number of people diagnosed with Melanoma in Angelina County decreased during 2002-2006. The agency reports 62 total new cases during that time period with 22 melanoma cancer mortalities. Although these latest figures appear low compared to other cancer-related deaths, these statistics place Angelina County above the state’s average for Melanoma.

Through education and counseling with personal physicians, Memorial Health System of East Texas encourages the local community to be aware of the causes, risk factors and signs of melanoma and skin cancer.

About Memorial Health System of East Texas

As the largest health care system in the deep East Texas area, Memorial Health System of East Texas is a private, not-for-profit hospital that provides care to almost a quarter of a million patients each year. Since its inception in 1949, Memorial Health System has paved the way for quality, innovative health care in East Texas. In fact, Memorial consistently ranks among the nation’s best for exceptional health care and patient satisfaction.

Memorial Health System of East Texas is comprised of four hospitals—Memorial Medical Center—Lufkin, Memorial Medical Center—Livingston, Memorial Medical Center—San Augustine, and Memorial Specialty Hospital, the only rural long-term acute care facility within the area. Memorial offers a wide array of services, including the newly renovated Arthur Temple, Sr. Regional Cancer Center, which has earned another three-year accreditation with commendation from the Commission on Cancer. Additionally, Memorial is a regional cardiac care center affiliated with the Methodist-DeBakey Heart Center in Houston. The hospital also is known for providing the area’s only comprehensive diabetes center—The Horace C. Polk Regional Diabetes Center.

Other centers of excellence include the Temple Imaging Center that offers some of the most advanced procedures in the area, including PET/CT scanning for cancer and Alzheimer's, 64 Slice CT scanning, Open Bore MRI, 4D Ultrasound, and digital mammography. Other specialty areas include Orthopedic care, Women's Services, Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation, Homecare, Wound and Hyperbaric Therapy, Kidney & Diabetes Treatment, Sleep Disorders Treatment, and Express Lab. Memorial Health System of East Texas—founded and funded by the people it serves.