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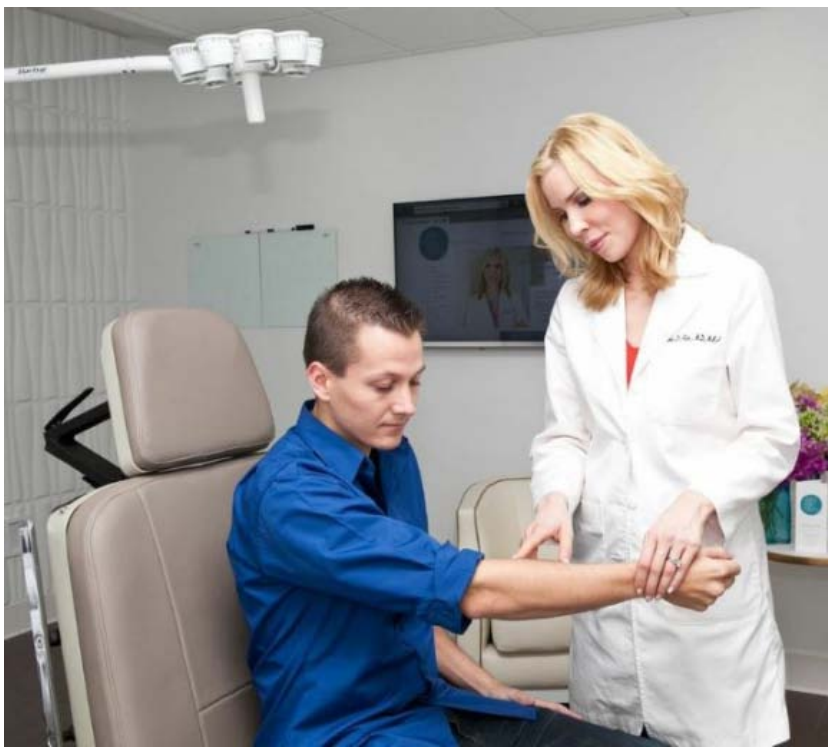
 

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Fundraiser will look to shine light on skin cancer

By Bianca Kaplanek

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Melanie Palm, M.D., performs a free skin cancer check as part of her SolSearch fundraiser. Courtesy photo

SOLANA BEACH — A Solana Beach dermatologist is once again doing a little “Sol Searching” to increase awareness about skin safety.

To kick off Melanoma Awareness Month, Melanie Palm, M.D., will hold her fourth annual [SolSearch fundraiser](#) beginning at 5:30 p.m. May 1 at Beachwalk Center on South Coast Highway 101.

The \$25 tickets go on sale April 1, with the first 100 buyers receiving swag bags valued at more than \$500.

While the event is a fun way to educate the public about the dangers of sun exposure, the serious work begins April 26, when Palm and three of her colleagues will hold free skin screenings from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at her Art of Skin office at 437 S. Coast Hwy. 101, Ste. 217.

In previous years Palm said between 60 and 80 people were checked head to toe for suspicious growths and moles.

She said several problem spots were discovered, including a rare sarcoma.

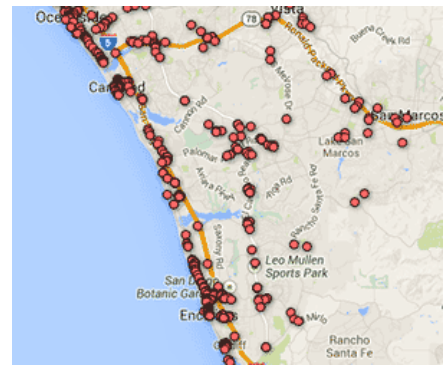
“It’s definitely worthwhile,” Palm said. “Many patients would have been significantly affected if they had not come in.”

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While most people know direct sun exposure is not healthy, Palm said many are surprised to learn that even on cloudy days they should wear sunscreen. She said people are also unaware that they are usually not using enough sunscreen.

"It's called the shot-glass rule," she said. "The average bottle of sunscreen is about 4 ounces. About 1 ounce should be applied every 90 minutes, which means there are generally about four applications per bottle. People typically under use it by about 50 percent."

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers, accounting for nearly half of all cancers in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society.

More than 3.5 million cases of basal and squamous cell skin cancer are diagnosed in this country each year. Melanoma, the most serious type, accounted for more than 76,600 cases of skin cancer in 2013.

Risk factors include multiple or unusual moles, severe past sunburns and unprotected or excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation from sunlight or tanning booths.

"There is no good way to get a suntan," Palm said. "The idea of a healthy tan is not great. If you want a healthy glow, use sunless tanning, such as spray-ons."

Palm acknowledges staying out of the sun is difficult in Southern California, but she said people can be smart about sun exposure.

"Avoid peak sun times between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.," she said. "Seek shade or use an umbrella. And be smart about the application of sunscreen."

While the Food and Drug Administration recommends a minimum SPF of 15, the Skin Cancer Foundation and most dermatologists prefer 30 SPF or higher. Palm said people should also check sunscreen labels to ensure the product blocks UVA and UVB rays.

Appointments are required for the free April 26 screenings. To schedule, or to buy tickets for SolSearch, call the Art of Skin office at (858) 792-7546

After April 15 tickets to SolSearch will be available at San Diego Tidbits at artofskinmd.com/solsearch2014.

The event will feature live music by the acoustic duo Ottopilot, food samplings from local vendors and lead sponsor California Pizza Kitchen and an open cocktail bar.

Raffle and silent auction prizes include cosmetic dermatology products and services, gift certificates to area businesses and restaurants and, of course, sunscreen samples.

"We are giving away about \$20,000 worth of amazing services," said Sarah Anne Dordel, Palm's director of business development. "There will be some really smokin' deals."

Money raised will benefit the Skin Cancer Foundation, for which Palm is a skin care ambassador. Palm said the first event raised about \$10,000. This year she is hoping to reach \$25,000.

In addition to increasing awareness, the event helps fund research efforts and early detection, she said.



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