



1 in 5 Americans
will be diagnosed with skin cancer
in their lifetime.

Why is a Full Skin Exam (FSE) recommended at my first / yearly visit, even if I am just coming in for a spot or acne or a rash?

Skin cancer is the most common form of all cancers. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people will develop it in their lifetime. When left undiagnosed, skin cancer can result in disfigurement and even death. Full skin exams are the best way to ensure that you do not become a statistic in the battle against skin cancer.

Many people believe that skin cancer can only develop in areas of the body exposed to the sun, but skin cancer can develop on any part of the skin and even mucosal membranes. Additionally, the average person can only see 50% of their own body.

What should you expect during your Full Skin Exam?

Since skin cancer can occur anywhere on the body, the exam is a “head-to-toe” affair. Typically we will start looking at your hair and head, paying close attention to the ears, nose and back of the neck (the most common areas for excess sun exposure). The provider will adjust your gown systematically to examine the skin on each area throughout your body, even between your fingers, toes and the bottoms of your feet!

As the provider performs the exam, they may use a hand held dermatoscope, which magnifies the skin 10x which allows the provider to see pigmentation in greater detail.

All of our providers realize that sometimes it may seem they may have ignored a spot, but it is likely being passed over because the main goal is to find any suspicious appearing lesions. In addition to their education, our providers look at skin all day, every day and are quite experienced at discerning which ones need attention. If there is a spot worrisome to you, make sure you let the provider know so they are able to address it with you.

As the exam is being performed, there may be areas identified for treatment. After discussing the diagnosis and treatment with you, minor procedures can be taken care of during the appointment. The two most common treatments are:

- ➔ Skin biopsy – a small sample of a suspicious lesion is removed under local anesthetic. It is then sent to a lab to be examined under a microscope to determine if further treatment is needed.
- ➔ Cryosurgery (aka known as liquid nitrogen and cold spray) – it is a quick spray used to remove lesions on the surface of the skin. Most commonly used for pre-cancerous actinic keratosis.



At Dermatology Associates of Ithaca, our goal is to catch skin cancers early and urge patients not to let shyness keep them from coming in. Suspicious lesions and concerns are easiest to treat when detected early, avoiding more serious and involved treatments down the road.

