

Is 24 too young to start worrying about skin cancer?

"Not any longer," says dermatologist Isabella Gyening, M.D., F.A.A.D. "In the past, skin cancer was most commonly associated with those 50 or older, but there has been a scary shift to increasingly younger patients, including some in their 20s."

Dr. Gyening believes this trend could be related to younger patients sunbathing to achieve suntans for cosmetic reasons. "Many are under the misconception that tans are a sign of good health, but dermatologists know that sun exposure is the leading cause of skin cancer, including melanoma – the most dangerous form."



Dr. Gyening advises anyone exposed to the harsh Texas sun to apply sunscreen even on cloudy days. "Up to 40 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays can penetrate overcast skies," she says. "A broad-spectrum sunscreen that reflects both UVA and UVB rays is required for proper protection."

She also says the use of tanning beds may be to blame for the damage that's being seen among younger patients.

"Tanning beds deliver a concentrated flow of UV rays that are seven to 10 times stronger than the sun's," she says. "I would like everyone – no matter your age – to be aware you could be damaging your skin in this manner."

Early detection is the key to successful treatment.

"If you notice a suspicious or changing pigmentation on your skin, get examined by a board-certified dermatologist," concludes Dr. Gyening, who cares for patients at Kelsey-Seybold's Berthelsen Main Campus and Downtown At The Shops locations.