



*Natural building blocks for quality of life*

# HEALTH ALERT

## Skin Cancer Detection & Protection

In recent years, there has been an increase in ultra violet radiation reaching the earth's surface. A corresponding increase has occurred in the number of people being diagnosed with skin cancer. Worldwide, skin cancers are now the leading cancers with an estimated 700,000 new cases each year and 1,500 resultant fatalities in the United States. Who is most at risk? Anyone can get skin cancer, but fair skinned, blue eyed workers in construction, surface mining and agriculture are most at risk. Surface miners are at particular risk, as there is the additional component of reflected rays from light colored walls and stockpiles. Prevention is always better than cure. Require your workers to wear long sleeve shirts and long trousers. Wide brimmed hard hats are available, as are neck flaps that may be of particular benefit to artisans such as welders or mechanics. Eye protection, clear or tinted, can and should offer a high u/v blocking protection. Sunscreen liquids may not be a popular or practical solution in a potentially gritty environment, but if an employee elects to use one, a rating of at least 25 is desirable.

There are two types of skin cancer, carcinoma and melanoma. Carcinoma is relatively easily treated if diagnosed early. Rarer but more deadly is melanoma. Since these conditions have a latency period of up to twenty years, many people take the risk lightly. In discussions with your workers, advise them that one in six Americans will develop a form of skin cancer. Their chances of contracting the disease increase if they choose to ignore simple protection options. Some warning signs of skin cancer are:

- A skin growth that increases in size and appears pearly, translucent, tan, brown, black or multi colored.
- A mole that changes color, texture, size, thickness or is larger than a pencil eraser.
- A spot or growth that continues to itch, hurt, crust, scab, erode or bleed.
- An open sore that persists for more than four months or that heals and then reopens.
- Any new mole that appears after age 21.

A valuable NIH / Medlink interactive training module for home or group use can be accessed via <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/skincancer.html>