



Strang Cancer Prevention Institute

Dedicated to Promoting Cure by Early Detection and Research to Prevent Cancer since 1933

Prevention

Skin Cancer Awareness Month May 2026

SKIN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Note to readers: Innovation is essential for cancer prevention. New analytic, diagnostic, and treatment methods, including precision medicine and artificial intelligence, continue to transform early detection and risk reduction. The Strang Cancer Prevention Institute, whose mission since 1933 has been to promote the cure of cancer through early detection and research, will continue to highlight important advances that improve patient outcomes and expand access to life-saving care.

SUMMARY

Skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, yet its incidence continues to rise. Recent advances highlight the growing role of artificial intelligence in both early detection and prevention, while behavioral interventions remain central to reducing risk. Together, these approaches reinforce the idea that effective prevention depends on both technological innovation and sustained changes in sun-exposure habits.

SKIN CANCER SCREENING

Can AI make cell phone screening for skin cancer feasible? Artificial intelligence is increasingly used to analyze medical images, and similar approaches are now being applied to photographs of skin lesions taken with cell phones. Oyedeji and colleagues evaluated multiple AI models designed to classify these images as benign or malignant and to provide more specific diagnostic categories.¹

In this real-world analysis, the best-performing models correctly classified lesions in 65% to 80% of cases, depending on the model and task. While this level of accuracy is not sufficient to replace clinical evaluation, it suggests that AI tools could support earlier identification of suspicious lesions, particularly in settings where patients have limited access to dermatologic care.

Some models also incorporate additional clinical information, such as lesion history or patient risk factors, which may further improve diagnosis accuracy.^{2,3} These tools therefore have potential as a first step in identifying lesions that warrant medical attention. However, they remain limited to evaluating individual lesions. In clinical practice, physicians perform full-body examinations to identify additional lesions that patients may overlook, particularly in areas that are difficult to self-observe.

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION

Intentional tanning remains common despite strong evidence that artificial sources of ultraviolet radiation, such as tanning beds, increase the risk of malignant melanoma and of squamous and basal cell carcinoma.⁴

Researchers are exploring how visual tools can change behavior. In one study, Swiss investigators used AI-generated simulations to show participants how their skin would age with continued sun exposure. Using photographs of young women, they created projections of facial aging up to age 80. After the intervention, 92% of participants reported immediately reducing their sun exposure, and 96% of those followed maintained this change after two years. Preference for high-SPF sunscreen (SPF 50+) increased from 48% to 60%. These results suggest that personalized, visual representations of long-term damage can motivate sustained changes in sun protection behavior.⁵

Education-based interventions also remain effective. A multi-institutional study of the Sun Protection Outreach Teaching by Students (SPOTS) program showed improvements in adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to sun protection. After participation, knowledge of sunscreen use increased by 34%, the belief that tanning is harmful more than doubled (107% increase), and intention to use sunscreen increased by 27% ($p < .001$). In addition, 58% of participants reported increased sunscreen use.⁶

SKIN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

HOW TO REDUCE UV EXPOSURE

Avoid sun exposure, especially during midday hours (10 AM to 4 PM, or earlier during daylight saving time). Use shaded play areas for children whenever possible.

When you need to be in the sun, wear broad-brimmed hats, sunglasses, and tightly woven clothing. Some fabrics protect better than others. Denim provides strong protection, while a typical cotton T-shirt offers only limited protection, about UPF 8. Fabrics with higher UPF are available.

Apply sunscreen before going outside and reapply it regularly. Apply about 15 minutes before sun exposure, and reapply every two hours, or after swimming or heavy sweating.

Reapplication is more important than the SPF number alone. SPF indicates how much UV radiation reaches the skin. For example, SPF 15 allows about 7% of UV rays through, while SPF 30 blocks about 97% and SPF 50 about 98%. Higher numbers offer slightly more protection, but no sunscreen blocks all UV radiation.

In practice, most people apply less sunscreen than recommended, which reduces its effectiveness. For this reason, higher-SPF products (SPF 50 or higher) can provide better protection in real-world use.

Sunscreen should also be used on cloudy days, as ultraviolet radiation still reaches the skin even when the sun is not visible.

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2. Mertahi AE, et al. AI-driven skin cancer detection from smartphone images. *PLOS ONE*. 2025;20(7):e0328402.
3. Blum A, et al. Artificial intelligence and smartphone applications in dermatology. *Hautarzt*. 2020;71(9):691–698
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6. Mansfield PK, et al. Multi-Institutional Study Evaluating the Efficacy of SPOTS (Sun Protection Outreach Teaching by Students), a Skin Cancer Prevention Educational Program for Adolescents. *Dermatol Surg*. 2025 Mar 31;51(7):661-667.



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IMPORTANT LINKS FROM THE STRANG WEB SITE

<https://www.strang.org/>

SKIN CANCER SCREENING AND PREVENTION

<https://www.strang.org/skin-cancer>

MISSION

<https://www.strang.org/mission>

HISTORY

<https://www.strang.org/history>

TIMELINE

<https://www.strang.org/timeline>

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<https://www.strang.org/board-of-trustees>

NCI (National Cancer Institute) CANCER CENTERS BY STATE

<https://www.strang.org/us-cancer-centers>

STRANG CANCER PREVENTION COOKBOOK

<https://www.strang.org/strang-cookbook>

RESEARCH GRANTS AND PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

<https://www.strang.org/dianne-zola-ovarian-cancer-research>

<https://www.strang.org/research-grants-programs-supported>

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The Strang Cancer Prevention Cookbook

Reduce your Risk for Cancer by Eating a Healthy Diet!

No-Fuss Broccoli Soufflé

4 Servings

4 cups fresh broccoli florets or 1 1/4 pounds frozen broccoli, thawed and drained
1 medium potato peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
2 large egg whites
1 large egg
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, to taste
1/3 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 teaspoon olive oil or olive oil– based cooking spray



Cook the broccoli florets and potato in boiling salted water until very tender, 5-7 minutes. Drain. Puree the broccoli and potato in a food processor until no large chunks remain. Add the remaining ingredients except for the olive oil and puree until very smooth. Evenly coat four 4-6 ounce ramekins or small ceramic bowls with olive oil and fill with the broccoli mixture. Pat down and smooth out the surface with a rubber spatula so that it is flat and firmly packed.

Microwave individually for 5-8 minutes on high (time depends on the power of the oven) until the center is set and firm. Run a paring knife around the sides of the ramekins to loosen the soufflé's for easy removal. Carefully invert each mold and serve hot or at room temperature.

Notes: For a lighter soufflé whip the egg whites separately until soft peaks form. Fold the egg whites into the seasoned, pureed broccoli mixture and continue as directed.

Calories 126 Protein 12g Carbohydrates 14g Fat 4g Cholesterol 59mg Dietary fiber 5g Saturated fat 2g

Major sources of Potential cancer fighters: Phytochemicals: capsaicin, glucosinolates, plant polyphenols (flavonoids), plant sterols, terpenes (carotenoids, monoterpenes).

Recipe by Laura Pensiero, R.D., **Strang** Nutrition Consultant
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May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month

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