

## As Skin Cancer Rates Remain on the Rise, Young Adults Continue their High-Risk Sunbathing Behaviors



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### IN THIS ISSUE...

**As Skin Cancer Rates Remain on the Rise, Young Adults Continue their High-Risk Sunbathing Behaviors**

**A Letter from the President**

**Ways to Reduce One's Risk of Skin Cancer**

**Melanoma vs. Nonmelanoma Cancers**

**Body Modification:**  
Its Associated Stigmas and Risks

**The Link between Sleep and Nap Habits of College Students and their Academic Performance**

**A Rapidly Rising Number of Type 2 Diabetes Diagnoses in Young Adults Demands the Attention of Health Care Providers**

There will be over one million new cases of skin cancer diagnosed this year. And, even though skin cancer is the most preventable type of cancer, it remains the most common form of cancer in the United States. Despite the numerous educational efforts and informative advertisements, adolescents and young adults continue to expose themselves without proper protection, thus increasing their risk of developing melanoma or nonmelanoma skin cancers within their lifetime.

Young adults, as a whole, comprise the age group which spends the most time in the sun. Studies have shown that there are significant differences within this age group based on gender and their knowledge of skin cancer and perceived susceptibility to the disease. Female subjects demonstrate more knowledge about skin cancer and more positive views toward preventative measures than did their male peers. However, females reported significantly more high-risk behaviors (i.e., sunbathing, use of tanning beds, lack of use of sunscreen, etc.) and placed a higher value on suntans. Females also had more incorrect and/or unsafe beliefs regarding suntanning and skin cancer. Females regarded sunbathing as a relaxing activity and their reported behaviors suggest that the benefits of sunbathing outweighed their risk of developing skin cancer.

Another study examined the link between familial and peer factors influence on sunscreen usage. Participants, students at a northeastern college, reported using sunscreen on their face and body approximately half the time while sunbathing. While there have been other studies that reported higher usage numbers, it is believed that sunscreen usage is strongly dependent on geographical location and its related likelihood of exposure. As far as likelihood to use sunscreen, participants reported that they were more likely to use sunscreen on their faces while sunbathing when their socially significant others (romantic partners, friends, etc.) used sunscreen. Results support the idea that parents and immediate family members' sunscreen use habits specifically predicted participants' sunscreen use.

Given the link between familial influences on sunscreen use, this generation must begin proper usage habits to ensure that their children will develop healthy sun exposure habits. Given that most lifelong habits are developed during adolescence and young adulthood, college students are the perfect audience to educate about the dangers of sun exposure and proper sunscreen use, along with other preventative behaviors regarding skin cancer. Male students should be informed about the facts pertaining to skin cancer and the preventative measures that exist, while female students, given their value on a tanned, healthy appearance, should be educated about the long term effects of sunbathing on their appearance, including: rough, leathery-looking skin, wrinkles, and the appearance of skin lesions such as actinic keratoses, and cataracts later in life.

*Continued on Page 2.*

## A Letter from the President of Collegiate Risk Management



Vonda White  
President  
Collegiate Risk Management

Dear Readers,

*Collegiate Health News & Views* was created to provide a forum for trends and news that affects college student health insurance. This newsletter will feature the latest news, research and achievements to keep you informed.

Collegiate Risk Management is a national firm specializing in domestic and international student health insurance and intercollegiate sports insurance for colleges and universities. On average, we have saved 15 percent on client health insurance premiums, while improving the overall plan design, benefits and customer service. We can help you with your current plan. Or if you are interested in going hardwaiver, mandatory, or being part of a consortium, Collegiate Risk can initiate and facilitate the process. Our account executives are passionately committed to representing our students' best interests, and to raising the standards of student health care.

As we all strive to better serve students, sharing information among the college health community is a valuable tool. If you have a topic of concern or developments you'd like to see covered, I encourage you to contact me at [vonda@collegiaterisk.com](mailto:vonda@collegiaterisk.com). Your input is very important as it allows us to provide you and your peers with the vital information you need. With this newsletter, we hope to provide you with just such a resource and forum.

Sincerely,

*Vonda White*

Vonda White President,  
Collegiate Risk Management

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## Ways to Reduce One's Risk of Skin Cancer



- Apply SPF 15+ sunscreen 30 minutes before exposure
- Reapply SPF 15+ sunscreen every 1.5 – 2 hours or after swimming or sweating
- Dress in protective clothing, including hats
- Use shade when available
- Limit sun exposure during midday (10:00 am – 4:00 pm)
- Avoid artificial sources of ultraviolet radiation, such as tanning beds

### Melanoma vs. Nonmelanoma Cancers

- Nonmelanoma skin cancers are linked to cumulative exposure to ultraviolet radiation .
- Melanoma skin cancer is linked to intense episodes of ultraviolet exposure resulting in sunburns.
- Melanoma, the most deadly form of the disease, continues to increase at a rate of approximately 3% each year.
- According to the American Cancer Society, more than 62,000 new cases of melanoma will be reported this year. More than 8,400 people will die as a direct result of melanoma.
- Risk factors for both include: exposure to ultraviolet radiation, skin type, eye and hair color, tendency to tan or burn, presence of freckles and/or moles, personal and family history of skin cancer, and occupational sun exposure.

# Body Modification: Its Associated Stigmas and Risks



Body modification refers to a handful of procedures that are designed to change the appearance of the body and includes adornment, branding, coiffure, cosmetics, cutting, body piercing, scarification, and tattooing. In America, some of these practices, such as use of cosmetics, are commonplace, while others like branding and scarification are extremely rare. Research reveals that tattooing and piercing are on the rise, especially among young adults.

Although there is a lack of empirical evidence linking tattoos and body piercings to personality, mood, or psychopathology, the general public population appears to perceive individuals possessing these types of body modifications generally negatively<sup>1</sup>. A study completed in 2000 asked children between the ages of 6 – 16 to rate a series of drawing of three men, some with visible tattoos and some without. Participants were much more likely to attribute negative acts with the tattooed figure. In another study completed in 2002, high school students were asked to rate photos of women based on 13 personal characteristics. Students rated a woman with a single visible tattoo on her upper right arm as less athletic, attractive, motivated, honest, generous, mysterious, religious, and intelligent than those who rated the same women with her tattoo digitally erased. Finally, another survey in 2006 of human resource managers and college recruiters would negatively view applicants possessing visible tattoos.

It used to be that tattoos or piercings were used by members of specific social groups (i.e., bikers) or those belonging to special (i.e., military) groups or organizations<sup>1</sup>. In 2008, a study of a large sample of college students found that body modification in the form of tattooing and piercings have found their way into the mainstream. In this specific study, a quarter of all participants possessed at least one tattoo and approximately half had at least one body piercing (defined for men as anywhere on the body and for women as anywhere on the body excluding the earlobes). Given that 25 percent of the middle class college population possess permanent tattoos, it is no longer valid to refer to tattoos as a sign of social deviance or personality or character flaws. Even with an increasing number of young adults with either tattoos or piercings, it is going to take some time for the associated negative social stigmas to subside.

Although the main public opinion regarding tattoos is a negative one, why do young adults continue to get them? There have been numerous reasons that individuals cite for their specific reasoning some of which include self-expression, an attempt to feel unique, and their appealing designs. Along with the negative social connotations, those who get tattoos must also endure certain physical and psychological risks. During the tattooing, there is a risk for bloodborne diseases, including hepatitis B and C. After the tattoo is complete, there is a risk for localized skin infections and allergic reactions to the various non-FDA regulated tattoo pigments which can contain nonstandardized ingredients. Additionally, after tattooing, recipients of tattoos may begin to feel embarrassed by their decision to mark themselves permanently and even begin to have low self-esteem as a direct result of the tattoo. Some people are able to hide their tattoo with clothing, bandages, and jewelry, while others opt for the painful, expensive, and lengthy laser removal.

A study of college students and their decisions for getting tattoos was conducted in 2002. Its results found that in general, both tattooed and non-tattooed students did not believe there was a major risk of hepatitis and allergies with tattoos<sup>2</sup>. Nor did either group associate the bleeding that often accompanies a tattoo procedure with a risk for blood borne diseases. Their reports indicated that their parents opinion regarding the tattoo and potential regret later in life were of more importance than the potential risks of sun sensitivity and skin irritation. Six percent of the survey participants had reported getting their tattoo removed and one-third said they would not do it again.

Given the risks and permanence of tattoos, students should take time when deciding why they want a tattoo. Further education about the risks of disease, infections, and reactions associated with both tattoos and piercings is necessary so that this group is fully aware of any complications that could result from their decisions. While being in college provides students with many opportunities to discover their unique personalities and beliefs, they must be aware of the risks, both medically and socially speaking, when deciding to part-take in any form of body modification.

# The Link Between Sleep and Nap Habits of College Students and their Academic Performance



Research conducted by the National Sleep Foundation reports that more than 40 percent of Americans have issues sleeping, mainly problems falling asleep or remaining asleep through the night. College students make up a specific demographic with unique sleeping habits with as many as 74 percent napping at least once weekly. In one study, as many as 71 percent of the college students surveyed were dissatisfied with their sleep. Whether it is sleep deprivation, insomnia, or an inconsistent sleep schedule, each plays an important factor in a student's academic success.

The benefits of sleep are well-known. Sleep and wakefulness are coordinated by the nervous system, a drive for homeostatic balance, and the circadian rhythm, an internal biological clock of sorts. Consisting of two states, non-rapid eye movement (NREM) and rapid eye movement (REM), research has supported the idea that REM cycles are essential to learning and increased brain performance. Students who receive less than eight hours of sleep miss out on the two hours of the REM cycle. The last two hours tend to be the most important for integrating new information, which is an especially important point for those students who prefer to cram for exams the night before. Sleep is essential for successful academic performance while in college.

Research has shown that students today are getting less sleep than they did 30 years ago. During the 1978 – 1979 academic school year, students reported sleeping an average of 7.3 hours a night<sup>3</sup>. Just 10 years later, a similar sample of students reported receiving only 6.87 hours of sleep. And, in 2001 that number dropped even more to an average of only 6.65 hours of sleep a night. In addition to the changes in the amount of sleep each night that college students are receiving, they are also reporting that their sleep schedules are less consistent than they used to be and they are reporting more sleep disorders and dissatisfaction with their sleep. In 1982, 26.7 percent of students reported having sleeping issues, and just 10 years later in 1992 that number had soared to 68.3 percent. As far as sleep satisfaction, in 1978, 24 percent of students stated that they were dissatisfied with their sleep; in 2000, 71 percent reported the same thing.

Numerous studies have shown that men and women face different sleeping issues. Women often report that they have difficulty falling asleep more often than men, along with more disruptions during night sleep, more frequent nocturnal awakenings, and poorer overall sleep quality<sup>4</sup>. Women also reported more instances of insomnia than men with 30 percent and 18 percent, respectively. Although women often reported more issues with sleep than men did, there was a relatively small difference between the sexes and the incidence of morning tiredness with men actually having a smaller higher number of reports with 53.7 percent and women a close second with 55.2 percent. Also significant to note is that more women than men reported napping for more than one hour during the weekday with 23.7 percent versus only 11 percent<sup>2</sup>.

The benefits of napping are becoming widely known, however, these benefits are often limited to naps that last only between 15 – 20 minutes, also referred to as power naps. Students who reported napping for more than 60 minutes during the day were more likely to report difficulty falling asleep that night, more night awakenings, and poorer sleep quality<sup>2</sup>. Longer nap times were also shown to be associated with morning tiredness and waking too early<sup>4</sup>. These findings support previous ideas that the quality of sleep is more important than the quantity.

The evidence concludes that simple changes in students sleeping behaviors may have a significant impact on their academic performance. While many college students may already be in an unhealthy sleep pattern, there are several steps they can take to slowly alter their pattern and start receiving quality sleep. Sleep journals are key to tracking what their current sleep pattern is and what changes they need to make. After they have completed at least seven days worth of entries, a clear picture of their habits should begin to appear. For those who cite insomnia, or problems falling asleep, they should take special care to avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine intake, especially in the several hours' right before sleep<sup>3</sup>. Those with an irregular sleep-wake schedule should strive to maintain a fairly narrow time frame for rising each morning and avoid variability from weekdays and weekends. Day time sleepiness can be subsided with short (15 – 20 minute) naps. Students should also take note that too much sleep can have the opposite effect and also increase sleepiness.

In extreme cases, students should consult with their physician and ensure that their issues with sleeping don't stem from a medical issue, such as sleep apnea. An open discussion, followed by the use of a sleep log are the first steps to deciding if further testing for such issues are necessary. However, the majority of students have just fallen into bad habits while at school which can be easily fixed using some of the aforementioned tips. All in all, students who begin to implement these sleep tips will start to feel more awake during the day, have a better quality of sleep, and even begin to see academic performance improvements.

# A Rapidly Rising Number of Type 2 Diabetes Diagnoses in Young Adults Demands the Attention of Health Care Providers



As the number of Americans who are overweight or obese continues to rise, so does the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes. Formerly referred to as adult-onset diabetes and noninsulin-dependent diabetes, further research has identified that unlike Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 can often be managed and even prevented with changes in eating habits and physical activity. While the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes increases with age, especially after 45 years of age, there have been an alarming number of teens and young adults diagnosed in recent years. This trend inevitably leads to the question, are college students educated about their Type 2 diabetes risk factors?

Complications related to diabetes range from high blood pressure to heart disease, kidney disease, blindness, and even premature death. Research has proven that while teens and young adults are less affected by diabetes than older adults, it has also shown that Type 2 diabetes is more aggressive in the long term when it appears in younger patients. One study found that those with early-onset Type 2 diabetes were 14 times more likely to have a heart attack and up to 30 times more likely to have a stroke than their peers without diabetes. These observations, combined with the fact that out of all the age groups, young adults have the fastest growing rate of obesity and Type 2 diabetes certainly raises concerns.

The first step to addressing this age group and their respective health issues is educating teens and young adults about their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and the preventative measures they can take to ensure long, healthy lives. Type 2 diabetes risk factors include, mainly, high-blood pressure, being overweight or obese, and a family history of the disease. Any teen or young adult with one or more of these conditions must understand that they have an increased susceptibility for developing Type 2 diabetes during their lifetime. Once people know their individual risk factors for developing Type 2 diabetes, they are more likely to make the lifestyle changes necessary help prevent and/or manage the disease.

While education about Type 2 diabetes, special attention should be paid to the teen/young adult age group. It is during this time that lifelong habits are created, whether they are healthy or unhealthy. This age group is also in need of

special consideration because many members of this age group are unaware of their individual risk factors. A recent study conducted by a midwestern university analyzed student's perceived susceptibility to diabetes and knowledge of preventative measures. The study highlighted some interesting notions among the age group.

Almost a third of the students reported having at least one family member with diabetes. Nearly 20 percent of the students polled admitted to being smokers. A little over half stated they had annual physical exams, and three percent were in a prediabetic condition. Of the students who had been diagnosed as prediabetic, almost half had a family member with diabetes. fourteen percent of the students had their blood pressure checked in the last year, while eight percent knew their blood glucose number, all of which had a family member with diabetes.

As far as knowledge of health habits and risk of diabetes, students in all four BMI (body mass index) groups had a graded relationship with their susceptibility to diabetes, i.e., the higher the BMI the higher their perceived risk. Interestingly, male students were less likely than female students to believe that their lifestyles had no impact on the onset of diabetes or the preventability of the disease. Additionally, students who reported being diagnosed as prediabetic seemed to be more likely to have an unfavorable attitude towards preventative measures than their peers.

Overall the study presented some interesting age related views regarding the risk and prevention of diabetes. The growing number of young adults being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes combined with the severity of complications related to early onset diabetes demand that education about the disease, the risk factors, and preventative measures be made clear to all age groups, but especially to those most at risk. Intervention by those in the health profession is required in the form of patient education and care through the management of weight, blood pressure, and glucose levels, and the encouragement of healthy habits, including daily exercise. With the appropriate programs and education, health care providers can help young adults understand the disease and develop healthy habits that will enable them to prevent and/or manage Type 2 diabetes, along with other diseases.

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