Most African-American Adults Skip Sun Protection, Study Suggests
2 February 2010, By Sharyn Alden

Only about 31 percent of African-American adults engage in at least one form of sun protection behavior such as wearing a hat, while 63 percent never use sunscreen, according to a new study.

Melanoma is more than 10 times higher in whites compared to blacks, but over a five-year span, blacks have a 78 percent lower survival rate compared to 92 percent of whites, according to study background material. One reason might be that melanoma in blacks usually is first seen when in an advanced stage, the researchers suggest.

Brawley said many dark-skinned blacks do not worry about protecting their arms, legs and trunk from the sun and that might not be a bad thing. “In my 25-year career, I have almost never seen melanoma in blacks (Brawley is African-American) except on the soles of the feet, palms of the hands, nail beds and sometimes on the scalp.”

Still, Brawley said he gives the same advice to light-skinned blacks as he does to white patients. “When people with a light complexion type go out in the sun, they need to use sun protection to avoid getting sunburned.”

Pichon said that to follow up on the study findings, “Next steps would include conducting interviews or focus groups with African-American adults to explore cultural and historical influences on sun protection behavior.”
