



# Melanoma Awareness

**S**kin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer. Types of skin cancer include basal and squamous cell, melanoma, and lymphoma. Of these, melanoma is the least common but most serious. Melanoma is a malignant tumor of melanocytes (cells derived from the neural crest that make the pigment melanin). While melanoma primarily affects the skin, it can also arise in mucosal surfaces and other parts of the body where neural crest cells migrate. Melanoma occurs predominantly in adults, although unlike many other common cancers, melanoma occurs across the life stages. While melanoma can occur among those younger than 30 years of age, incidence rates increase with age and are highest among those in their eighties. Nevertheless, melanoma is one of the more common cancers in young adults, especially among young women.

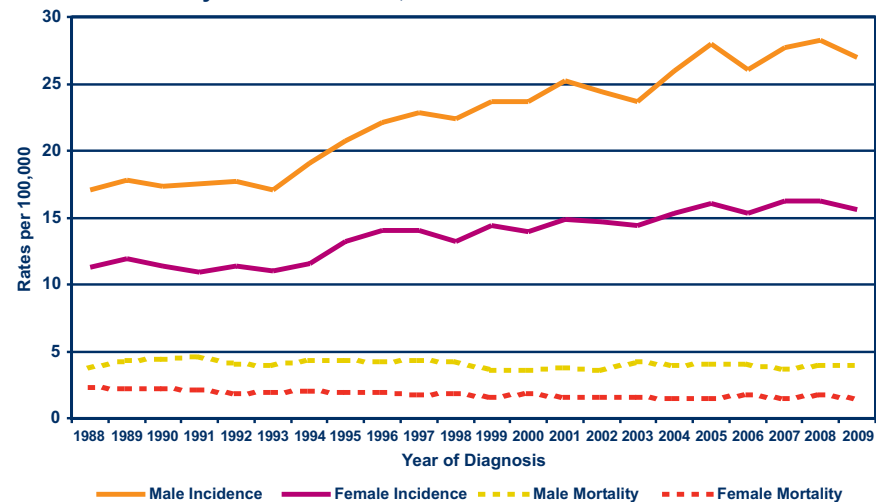
Incidence rates of melanoma have been rising for at least 30 years. In the United States in 2013, the American Cancer Society expected 76,690 new melanoma

diagnoses (45,060 in men and 31,630 in women), and 9,480 melanoma-related deaths (6,280 men and 3,200 women).

Of the 76,690 new invasive melanoma diagnoses expected in 2013, 7,225 of these cases are predicted to occur in California. Among California males, melanoma incidence has increased by an average of 1.9 percent per year

from 1996 to 2009, while male mortality from melanoma has decreased by an average of 0.7 percent per year from 1990 through 2009. Among California females, melanoma incidence has increased by an average of 1.3 percent per year from 1996 to 2009, while female mortality decreased from 1989 to 2009 by an average of 1.6 percent per year (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Age-Adjusted Invasive Melanoma Incidence and Mortality Rates by Sex in California, 1988-2009**

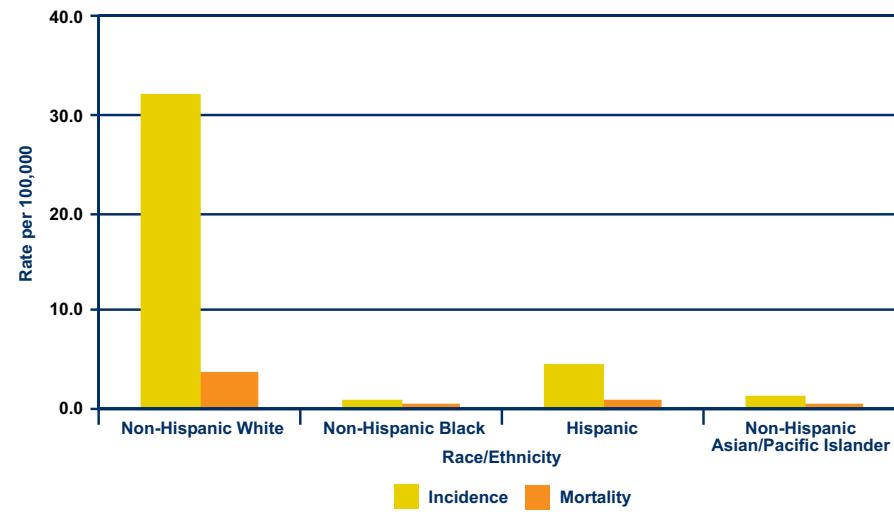


Prepared by the Cancer Registry of Greater California  
Source: California Cancer Registry

Melanoma incidence (I) and mortality (M) rates are highest among non-Hispanic whites (I=32.0 per 100,000; M=3.8 per 100,000), followed by Hispanics (I=4.5 per 100,000; M=1.0 per 100,000), then non-Hispanic Asians/Pacific Islanders (I=1.2 per 100,000; M=0.4 per 100,000), and are lowest among non-Hispanic blacks (I=0.9 per 100,000; M=0.4 per 100,000) (See Figure 2).

In California from 2000 through 2009, the majority of melanoma patients were diagnosed at the localized stage (84.4 percent), with only 8.3 percent diagnosed at the regional stage and 4.0 percent at the distant stage (metastatic melanoma). Five-year relative survival, a measure of the likelihood of surviving a specified cancer five years past diagnosis, is highest amongst those diagnosed at the localized stage and declines by stage of diagnosis (See Table 1).

Figure 2: Five-Year Age-Adjusted Melanoma Incidence and Mortality Rates by Race/Ethnicity in California, 2005-2009



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Source: California Cancer Registry

Table 1: Stage Distribution and Five-Year Relative Survival by Stage at Diagnosis for Melanoma (Males and Females Combined), California, 2000-2009

Stage at Diagnosis	Stage Distribution	Five-Year Relative Survival
Localized (Confined to Primary Site)	84.4%	98.2%
Regional (Spread to Regional Lymph Nodes)	8.3%	61.9%
Distant (Metastasized to Other Organs)	4.0%	16.2%
Unknown Stage	3.3%	67.3%

Source: California Cancer Registry  
Prepared by the Cancer Registry of Greater California.