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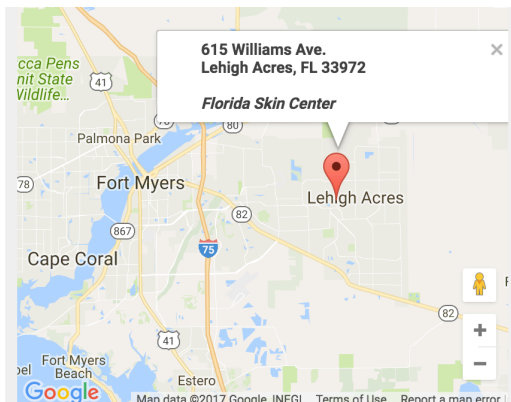
Center offers free skin cancer checks

By GABRIELA HARDAN

When a guest made an appointment for a free skin check at the Florida Skin Center in Lehigh Acres, physician assistant Cindy Huang discovered the patient had stage 0 Melanoma.

The skin check might have just saved the person's life.

Florida Skin Center's Lehigh office is offering "Free Skin Check Fridays," where the public can come in every Friday at no cost and have a skin check up. Space is limited and an appointment is required. No insurance is necessary to utilize the service.



Officials reported that the office averages about three to five appointments each week.

"We know that there are some patients who, unfortunately, do not have the opportunity to get the checks done," Dr. Anais Aurora Badia, founder of the Florida Skin Center, said. "So we thought it would be a great community service to have patients come in, even if they can't afford it, to get checked."

The office encourages people to regularly get full-body skin checks.

Officials hope that people will be more encouraged and motivated to have the checks done by offering the service for free. To make an appointment, call the Lehigh office at 239-561-3376.

"In general, we always advocate for skin checks to the public anyway," Huang said. "It's a way for us to offer services to people who otherwise wouldn't come into the office and get checked."

One in five people will get skin cancer in their lifetime, according to officials.

The Florida Skin Center does everything it can to educate the public about skin cancer. The staff goes out into the community and gives lectures about the causes of skin cancer and prevention methods.

"It's just so widespread that we want to make sure that people are aware that these regular skin checks really can save someone's life, or help them from something that can get more complicated," Badia said.

After completing her dermatology training in 2001 in Albany, New York, Badia founded the Florida Skin Center as a full-service facility and opened an office in Fort Myers. She started with three to four other doctors, before expanding into Cape Coral with an office in 2013.

After years of success and community involvement, she opened the Lehigh office in 2016.

"Originally, I came to this area because I had seen that there was a need for dermatologists here, specifically female dermatologists, that spoke Spanish and were bilingual," Badia said. "We're lucky enough to have a community to support us and help us grow the practice."

"We're very indebted to our patients," she added.

The staff spoke highly of Badia, speaking about her unique vision for her practice. They said she has a reputation for being dedicated to her patients and their overall experience while in Badia's care.

According to staff, the free check consists of a full body check, looking for any abnormalities that may raise concerns for the patient or doctor. The office prioritizes the comfort and safety of its patients.

"If this can somehow encourage other dermatologists to follow our lead, we would be very proud to start that kind of momentum and movement," George Gulisano, chief executive officer of the Florida Skin Center, said.

With summer coming up, the center offered the following tips on how to keep your skin safe:

- Sunscreen is one of the most important and effective measures in protecting your skin. Even when going outside for just 10 minutes, always be sure to apply sunscreen. If you are in the sun for a few hours, do not forget to reapply.
- The sunscreen you are using should be Broad Spectrum, SPF 30.
- In general, do not be spending too much time in the sun. If you have to, make an effort to look for shaded areas.

- The sun is most intense from 10 a.m. to about 4 p.m., so for those hours, minimize exposure to the sun.
- Get skin checks at least once a year.

For more information about the free skin checks, contact the Florida Skin Center at 239-561-3376 or visit online at: www.floridaskincenter.com/.

The Lehigh office is at 615 Williams Ave.

(<http://www.lehighacrescitizen.com/page/content.detail/id/540108/Center-offers-free-skin-cancer-checks.html?nav=5100>)