Did you know that black is the new orange? There is no series, movie, or book to educate us about this little secret. For some time, our American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) has had a campaign encouraging us to “Stop the Spot” and wear orange to help raise awareness of skin cancer and melanoma. Well, there is now a black ribbon campaign to help raise awareness of melanoma. So black is the new orange. This is much better for me personally, since I think I look better in black than in orange. In addition to black being the new orange, it is also now cool to encourage our patients to #getnaked. This is a timely topic, because the first Monday of May is recognized as Melanoma (Awareness) Monday. In fact, the entire month of May is dedicated to increase awareness of melanoma.

We all know that the incidence of melanoma is increasing. Thankfully, awareness of melanoma is therefore also increasing. Hopefully, with this awareness, the practice of sun-smart behaviors is also increasing. We all know that sun-smart behaviors include avoiding the peak hours of sun exposure from 10 AM to 4 PM, seeking shade, wearing sun protective clothing including hats and sun glasses, (re)applying sun block, as well as avoiding intentional or artificial UV exposure including tan beds. There are movements afoot across the country to reduce patient exposure to UV radiation via restrictions on tanning bed use. My home state of Arkansas has some very good laws in place to protect people from the dangers of artificial tanning, i.e. tanning bed use. Opportunely, nationally artificial UV light is now being treated as a carcinogen, similar to tobacco.

Raising awareness of melanoma remains important. Despite advancements in medical therapy, we know that early detection of melanoma has the greatest impact on survival. The most important prognostic indicator for melanoma is depth, and a melanoma that is caught earlier tends
As part of its “Stop the Spot” campaign, the AAD offers free resources like this infographic at www.aad.org/public/spot-skin-cancer/free-resources.

I recently shared some statistics about skin cancer and in particular melanoma with the Arkansas Medical Society. You might want to keep these data, culled from the AAD, Melanoma Research Foundation, and the Skin Cancer Foundation, handy as you educate your patients:

- One in five people develops skin cancer.
- One in 50 people develops melanoma. When I graduated medical school (20 years ago), I remember being taught that one in 200 people will develop melanoma.
- One person dies every 57 minutes of melanoma.
- Average survival with melanoma increased from 49 percent in 1950 to 91 percent in 2016.
- About 86 percent of melanomas are attributed to UV exposure.
- Melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25-29 years old and the second most common form of cancer for young people 15-29 years old.
- Melanoma is the fifth most common cancer for males and seventh most common for females.
- Half of all adults aged 18-29 report at least one sunburn in the past 12 months.
- Sustaining five or more sunburns in youth increases lifetime melanoma risk by 80 percent.
- Regular daily use of an SPF 15 or higher sunscreen reduces the risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma by 40 percent and the risk of developing melanoma by 50 percent.

Hopefully these facts will help empower you to educate your patients to be sun smart, wear black, and to #getnaked. The #getnaked initiative of the Melanoma Research Foundation is designed to encourage early detection of melanoma. Their premise is that individuals should not be afraid to have their skin examined and or afraid to discuss their “moles.”

Remind patients, too, that it takes at least an ounce of sunblock to cover a typical human body.

There are promising new developments in skin cancer diagnosis and treatment. But the best thing we can do right now is encourage behaviors to reduce and detect the disease.