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How Your Hair Stylist Can Keep You Healthy

Building upon the bond between clients and stylists to expand health awareness and prevention.

by [Amy Boulanger](#)
Oct 20, 2011

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I, for one, love the feel of an expert stylist massaging my scalp. There aren't many people I'll let near my head, but at the hands of a pro, I turn to mush.

Who doesn't appreciate some good pampering every now and then? But can my hair stylist help me stay healthy? Maybe.

Following a recently-published study in the *Archives of Dermatology*, salon stylists could play an important role in client's physical health. After all, with such up-close and intimate access to parts perhaps otherwise ignored or hidden (the tips of your ears, the back of your neck, views of your scalp through parted sections of hair), they can offer valuable insight when something new appears.

Stylists may be the first to notice "suspicious" new skin lesions, serving a pivotal role in detecting possible skin cancers. We may not pay attention to our scalps and ears (areas that get lots of exposure to the sun's UV rays), but our hair stylists do.

Sometimes financial matters prevent portions of the public from seeking advice from a qualified dermatologist. As the study points out, this may open up opportunities to partner with "nonmedical people who render personal service to the public to help with awareness of the need for skin cancer screening."

The survey (conducted in January 2010 and published this month) included participants from 17 hair salons in the greater Houston, Texas, area. Few hair professionals had any formal knowledge of skin cancer education (28.1%). Many, however, were interested in learning more about it.

Results from the roughly 300 surveys revealed that, over all, salon stylists were checking for unusual-looking skin lesions in the month before the survey:

- 37 percent looked at more than 50 percent of a customer's scalp
- 28 percent looked at more than 50 percent of a customer's neck
- 15 percent looked at more than 50 percent of a customer's face

Dr. Alan Geller (a co-author of the study) and his colleagues concluded that hair professionals could benefit from skin cancer education. Further knowledge could deepen their role in early detection of skin cancers.

Partnering with [The Melanoma Foundation of New England](#), Geller and others have created *The Skinny on Skin*, an educational program designed to help in the detection of melanoma. Based off the Houston survey, *The Skinny on Skin* campaign aims to train hair professionals—for free—throughout New England. Part of the process includes etiquette on talking about skin health with clients, building upon the often friendly (and personal) rapport shared by hair stylists and their clients.

Zoom in to Dolly Parton as wide-smiled, Southern drawing beauty shop owner in the early 90s film *Steel Magnolias*. Stylists often act as more than hair care professionals, but confidantes and lay therapists. And—possibly—facilitators in skin cancer prevention.



Check your symptoms

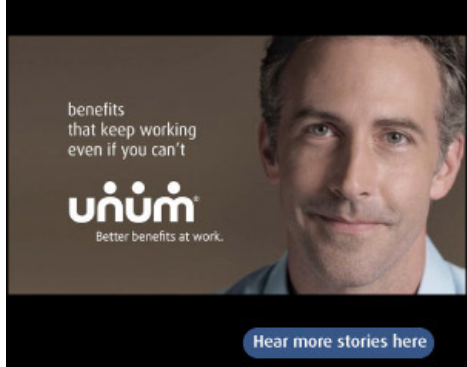


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