

## **Staying sun-smart: Remembering Jimmy Buffett**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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### **PRINT SCRIPT**

The month of September started on a somber note when country music superstar Jimmy Buffett passed away. The Margaritaville creator died from an aggressive form of skin cancer called [Merkel cell carcinoma \(MCC\)](#), a disease he battled the past four years.

MCC is a much rarer form of skin cancer, the Skin Cancer Foundation says, with one case per 130,000 people in the United States. Roughly 3,000 new cases are diagnosed a year, and the foundation says this is expected to increase to 3,250 cases a year by 2025.

OSF HealthCare advanced practice registered nurse Banesa Chavez warns people not to underestimate the signs of skin cancer.

“People think ‘oh this lesion is nothing,’ but you don’t know what’s underneath that lesion you see,” Chavez says. “You can have it there for years and it could have already spread elsewhere.”

Chavez says the aggressiveness of Buffett’s MCC should be cause for concern for people, and a reminder to take good care of your skin.

“They found it (the cancer) in the last couple of years, so it progressed quickly. Or it was already metastasized by the time they found it.”

Chavez says skin cancer doesn’t discriminate based off age or overall health. But she notes it is harder to battle skin cancer at an older age.

“You’re healthier when you’re younger. When you’re older, your organs aren’t functioning as they would for a 20 or 30-year-old person,” Chavez says. “So your treatment options may vary based on your health.”

### **Tips to protect skin:**

“If you notice any changes to your skin -- a lesion that’s growing, or something that’s new -- make sure you address it. Don’t ignore it. Also, apply sun block. When you apply sun block, look at the recommendations for how often you’re supposed to apply it. Because it does wear off.”

Chavez adds to wear a hat when you’re outside to avoid sun damage as well. She says if you do notice any changes in your skin, see your doctor as soon as possible so they can refer you to a dermatologist.

Skin cancer is by far the most common cancer. About one in five Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. When diagnosed early, the five-year survival rate for people with skin cancer is 99%.

To check on your skin's health, you can get a baseline exam with a dermatologist. [You can visit the OSF HealthCare website here to find a location near you to get seen.](#)