



By **C.J.**, Star Tribune

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Don't get too much sun

V.I.P. Hair & Nails owner **Tiffany Wilson** helps bust the myth that blacks don't get skin cancer.

In the July/August issue of Health magazine, Wilson says it never occurred to her -- being a person of color who has lived her whole life in Minnesota -- that she had anything to worry about with skin cancer. "Twelve years ago, Wilson noticed a pimple on her left hip. She poked and prodded it but never suspected anything. Three years later, it was diagnosed as a basal cell carcinoma," the magazine states. (Experts say BCCs are fairly easy to treat and not considered life threatening.)

Nonetheless, "'I was petrified when I heard the word cancer,' she remembers. 'When I hear clients talk about going to tanning booths, I say, 'Whatever you do, don't do that.' Sometimes they listen," Wilson told Health. I know for a fact she was warned against all that crazy sun tanning she did as a beach loving sun-worshipper.

Egan dermatologist Dr. **Charles Crutchfield III** put the magazine in touch with Wilson after being contacted about whether he treated patients of color with skin cancer.

Crutchfield shares the same beef I have with Health magazine's headline on the Wilson story: "Busting the dark-skin myth." Wilson is not dark-skinned!

"No, she's not," Crutchfield said. The headline is probably the result of some people considering any skin darker than theirs as dark.

"You can get skin cancer no matter what hue your skin is," Crutchfield said. "In fact, my grandfather [**Charles Crutchfield I**, who's 95!] just had a basal cell not too long ago. Once again, he's not super dark, either; nevertheless he's African-American."

Crutchfield said he has seen patients with really dark complexions who have skin cancer. "Not often, but it happens." That brought us to 2008 Wimbledon champions **Venus** and **Serena Williams**.

Crutchfield has treated neither but during Wimbledon he noticed "uneven color" especially pronounced on Serena's cheek. To Crutchfield it looks like post-inflammatory pigmentation, caused by irritation to the skin, which is not a precursor to cancer or vitiligo (which is what **Michael Jackson** *claims* to have).

What's under the bandage on Serena's upper right shoulder concerned both of us.

Though the sisters may arrive on court wearing sunscreen, I've never seen video of them reapplying it during a match. And they're constantly wiping off perspiration and any sunscreen.

While wiping off sweat "pretty much" removes most sunscreen, Crutchfield said. "Some of it will bind to the protein in your skin and stay, but the most effective thing is to reapply every 30 to 60 minutes."

There was another report on TV that stated the need for everybody to have his or her scalp examined regularly to stay on top of skin cancers that flourish there unnoticed.

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