



Dangers lurking in the skin

Darker-skinned people should know the dangers of skin cancer and how it affects them.

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Darker-skinned people are negatively affected by a subtype of skin cancer, known as acral lentiginous melanoma. This type of skin cancer is said to be independent of sun exposure and occurs on sites such as the palms of the hands and soles of the feet and in the nail beds. Unfortunately, this type of cancer is not noticed until it is highly pigmented, making it hard to treat, and can result in loss of limb or optimal limb function.

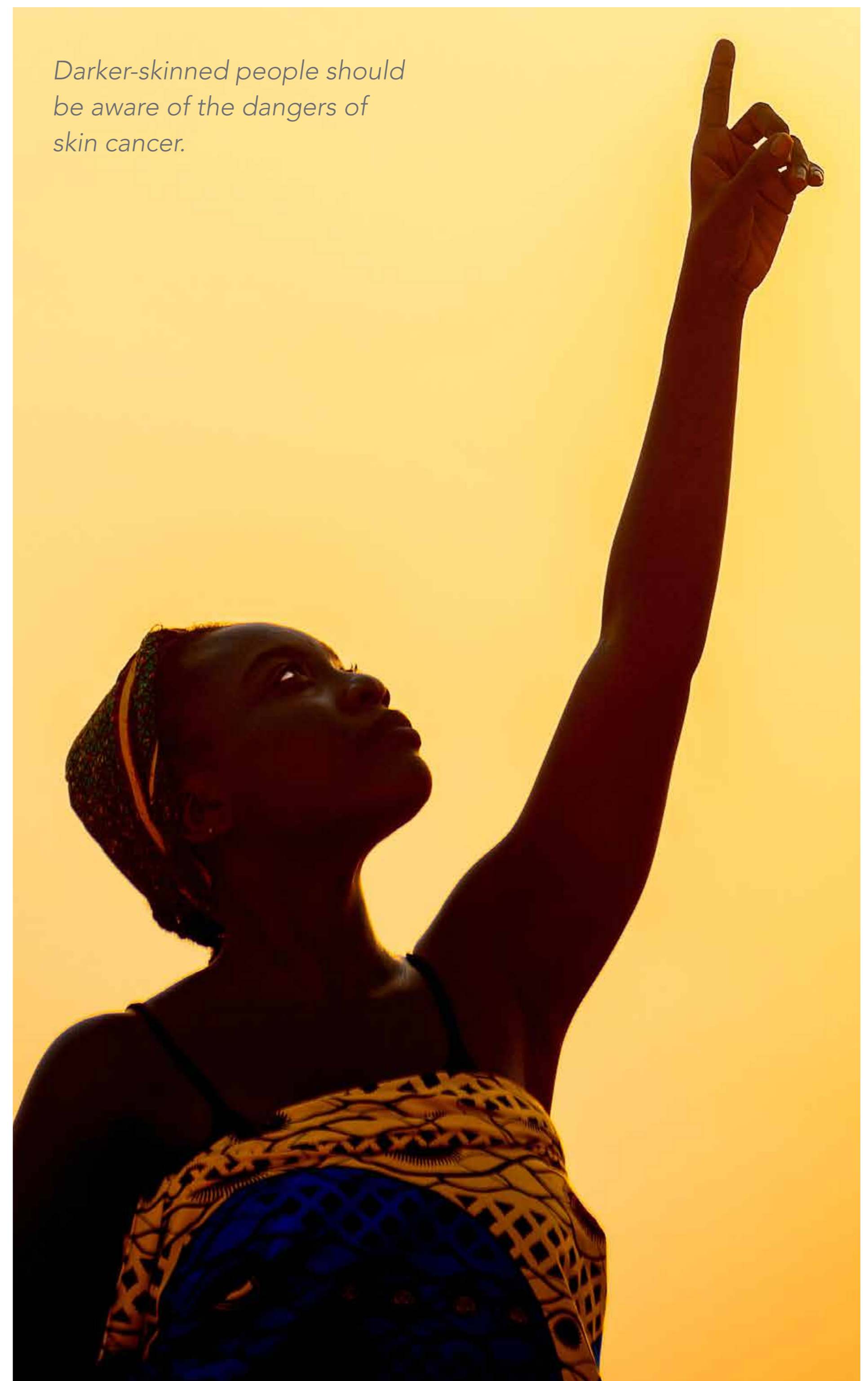
For years, we had a misconception that skin cancer only occurs in light-skinned people. Because of this, people need to be educated on acral lentiginous melanoma and the dangers of this disease.

“People need to be taught how to observe changes in skin pigmentation and be encouraged to seek medical treatment as soon as possible,” says Ilana Basson.

Researchers at the University of Cape Town, funded by the South African Medical Research Council, have implored on addressing this issue. They have created awareness of the prevalence of acral melanoma skin cancer among darker-skinned people, and are working on the development of targeted therapy for those already affected by the disease.

“Healthcare providers and scientists should educate people on acral lentiginous melanoma. They should also inform darker-skinned people of the dangers

Darker-skinned people should be aware of the dangers of skin cancer.



that ultraviolet (UV) rays pose on darker skin and encourage them to protect their skin from UV rays by using sunscreen and wearing protective clothing.”

Failure to do this could lead to increased rates of delayed disease presentation, delayed treatment and death.