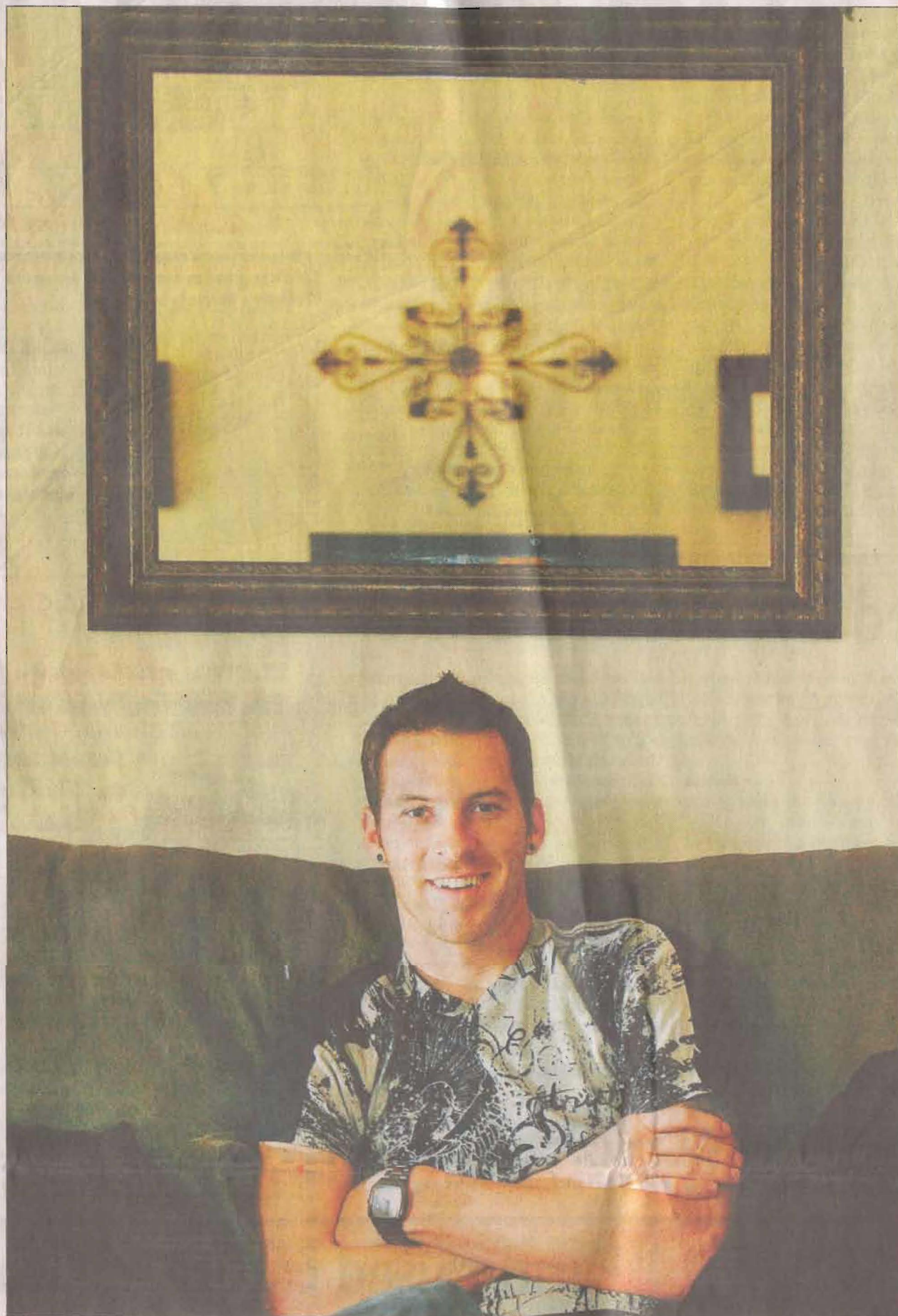


A 23-year-old endures a life-threatening battle with melanoma.



PHOTOS: CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Nate Schwegman of Irvine was a frequent user of tanning beds when he was in college and warns others against them.

SKIN SCARE

By COURTNEY PERKES
 THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Nate Schwegman wanted to look good without a shirt. So after sweaty workouts at the gym, he sizzled in the tanning bed. His fair, freckled skin would burn and then eventually bronze.

"I might as well look good when I'm young," Schwegman, 23, remembers thinking. "I don't care if I wrinkle when I'm old."

Even after his grandmother died of melanoma, he continued to tan. And he didn't stop after noticing a strange black mark on his back.

The spot eventually bled and Schwegman, who lives in Irvine, discovered that he had advanced melanoma. The deadliest form of skin cancer is now the second-most common cancer among young people 15 to 29.

Exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun or from tanning beds greatly increases the risk of melanoma. Teens and



Schwegman shows one of the scars from his Stage 3 melanoma. Today he has no cancer cells.

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Men slow to get treatment, urologist says

Men and women are different in so many ways, says Dr. Danny Keiller, a San Diego-based urologist.

Women care about their health; men seem not to, he says.

"It's amazing how men ignore their bodies and signs of problems," he said.

Case in point: urinary incontinence.

Not that men have as common a problem as women, Keiller said.

"Men have a long urethra and strong sphincter muscles," he said. "In addition to a shorter urethra, women often distort their anatomy in childbirth, making incontinence more likely."

Still, men are reluctant to admit incontinence, he says. They often do not seek treatment in a timely manner.

"Men don't sit around and talk to other guys when they have this problem," Keiller said. "As a result, most guys don't always recognize symptoms or know the various options to solving incontinence."

Q. What are the causes of male incontinence?

A. Men who are overweight, heavy smokers or have diabetes are more likely to experience urinary incontinence. And 1 in 10 men over the age of 40 experience urinary incontinence. It is one of the most common side effects of prostate cancer treatment — something that's on the rise as the boomers age.

Q. And then there is "overflow" incontinence. What is that?

A. This could be a serious sign something bad is going on. It is a life-threatening situation. The urine flows out of the urethra because the bladder is full. Like a bucket that is too full. Because the bladder is full it means there is high pressure in the bladder and the kidneys are full. This can damage the kidneys.

Q. While all these are serious situations, men seem more concerned about the appearance of incontinence. I have heard the tale of one man who lost control in public. He was in his late 70s and he decided he just would not go out again to a public place in case of a similar accident. His decision also confined his wife.

A. It is especially embarrassing to men, both socially and sexually. And from a hygiene standpoint, it can be horrible.

Men can wear a diaper and there are surgical procedures and medication, but all are often rejected by men, unfortunately.

If there is an overflow situation, for example, we can correct and relieve the obstruction with surgery. This should be done as soon as possible.

An overactive bladder can be dealt with through medication.

Q. What about diapers?

A. Some men choose diapers long term. But this solution is slow in coming. The products must be made for men, to fit the male pelvis.

And we do have a new operation for men who are incontinent after prostate surgery.

Q. You told me there are guys who drink one beer and have to make five trips to the bathroom. What do you tell them?

A. Go see a urologist.

To bring men the information they need on incontinence, Men's Health Network and SCA Personal Care North America, through their TENA brand of protective underwear, have created a Web site, **LockerTalk.com**.

The site offers educational resources to manage urinary incontinence issues through a discreet community of resources.

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SKIN

FROM PAGE 1

young adults are also the most frequent users of tanning beds. This year, public-health researchers at San Diego State University found that in many large cities, including San Diego, there are more tanning salons than there are Starbucks or McDonald's.

The World Health Organization recommends a ban on tanning beds for anyone under 18. In California, teens under 14 can't tan, but older teens can with parental permission.

When Schwegman went to college in Texas, he started tanning regularly. A friend managed a tanning salon, and he could tan there a couple times a week for free.

His skin would burn at first. He peeled a couple times, but his burns turned into tans.

One day in the bathroom mirror, he noticed a black mark on his back, a little bit smaller than a dime.

"It almost looked like a scab," he said.

When it never healed, he assumed it was a mole.

Eventually he showed his parents last year, who told him to see a doctor.

"I said to him, 'You need to get that off,'" said his stepmother, Mary Schwegman. "I gave him the name and number of the dermatologist. This is where I'm kicking myself for not realizing he's a 22-year-old guy and he's never going to go to the doctor."

Months later, last November, she asked Schwegman if he'd had the mole removed. He said no but that his back was starting to hurt.

"Then he lifted up his shirt and it was bleeding," Mary Schwegman said.

The next morning she called her dermatologist and took him to the appointment



CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Schwegman will have to get his skin checked every few months for the rest of his life.

herself.

A biopsy revealed that Schwegman had melanoma.

"I flipped out; I got teary-eyed a little bit," he said.

In January, he underwent a 3½-hour surgery to remove more back tissue and three lymph nodes that would be tested for cancer cells. Then he got another call to come in with his parents. The melanoma had spread to one node.

"I was scared, but I really was at peace about it," Schwegman said. "It was serious. It shocked me. I was crying. But it wasn't, 'Oh God, my life is over.'"

In February, he started 20 interferon treatments, a biological therapy that boosts the immune system to fight the cancer. He experienced brutal cold sweats and migraine headaches. He continued to work at his sales job, where he had health insurance to cover most of his medical bills.

He's had more scares since. Doctors removed another melanoma on his abdomen and two other non-cancerous moles. He will have to be vigilant in getting his skin checked every few months for the rest of his life.

"It's always been thought

of as a type of cancer that affects an older population," said Dr. Jonathan Baron, one of Schwegman's dermatologists. "One of the biggest issues is making people aware that it can occur in any age group. If you catch it early, the prognosis is actually quite good."

Mary Schwegman said she advises parents to have their teens' moles checked before they leave for college.

"Mothers, especially of boys, get them in to the dermatologist before they turn 18 and leave your house, because they will never get anything taken care of until they get married and have a wife who will bug them," she said.

This summer, when Schwegman takes his shirt off by the pool or at the beach, he smears sunscreen on his chest, across the 2-inch scar on his stomach and over the 6-inch scar across his back.

"I'm 23 years old, still fairly young," he said. "You have a long way to go. I want to grow old. The fact that I could have died at 23 is not me living life young."

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