

Save Your Skin!



Whether we're having fun – golfing, gardening, swimming, snowboarding – or putting in a hard day's work, spending time outdoors can expose us to the dark side of the sun. That's because everyone, whatever their skin color, is at risk for skin cancer. And young people are not immune, either. The American Cancer Society reports more than a million people are diagnosed with some form of skin cancer each year – yet the majority of cases could be prevented.

Sunscreen: Don't leave home without it

There is no such thing as a safe tan. Protecting your skin is a must, especially if you live in areas with intense sun exposure. Skin-burning ultraviolet rays can still come through cloudy skies, smog and window glass. What's more, sunlight reflects off water, sand, concrete and snow, and can penetrate water's surface.

Wear sunscreen daily, even if you're indoors most of the day.

- A broad-spectrum sunscreen reflects and absorbs both UVA and UVB rays. Look for products containing *zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, avobenzone (Parsol 1789) or oxybenzone.*
- Always use a minimum SPF of 15. If you're outside for long periods, use SPF 30 or more – the higher the better.
- Use a full ounce – about a palmful – to cover your body and face.
- Apply 20 minutes before going outside to allow it to absorb. Reapply every two hours if not engaged in sports or in strong sun.
- Wear waterproof or sweatproof sunscreen for high-sun outdoor activities and sports. Reapply every 40 to 80 minutes, or after swimming, perspiring heavily or drying with a towel.

Help protect yourself and your family with these sun safety tips:

- Seek shade whenever you're outdoors. Avoid unnecessary exposure between 10 AM and 4 PM, when the sun is strongest.
- Cover up with a long-sleeved shirt, long pants and a broad-brimmed hat that shades your face, neck and ears
- Keep infants under six months in the shade and cover the body with lightweight clothing. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends applying sunscreen only on small exposed areas, avoiding baby's mouth and eyes.
- Shield your eyes with sunglasses that provide at least 99 percent UV absorption – wraparound styles give the most protection
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to ensure your medications do not increase your skin's sensitivity to the sun

Sun-Smart Tip

Wearing sunscreen helps lessen your risk of damaging your skin with a sunburn – it does not “buy” you extra time in the sun

What about Sunless Tanning?

According to the fashion world, nothing says health and vitality like a deep, rich tan. To help you get the look without the risk, let's shed some light on "tanning" options that leave the sun out of it. (Keep in mind that, despite your tanned appearance, you still need to wear sunscreen when spending time outdoors.)

The FDA considers these products safe for external use:

Sunless tanning lotions and sprays. The main ingredient of extenders, as they're called, should be *dihydroxyacetone*; if you don't see DHA on the label, the product may actually be a tan accelerator. Extenders produce a golden shade (which wears off in a few days) by interacting with proteins on the skin's surface.

Bronzers. These cosmetic color additives "stain" the skin temporarily and wash off with soap and water.

Avoid these potentially harmful alternatives:

Tanning booths. Recent studies report increased risk for deadly melanoma cancer with long-wave UVA radiation – the kind used in tanning booths.

Tanning pills. Carotenoid color additives are not approved by the FDA as tanning agents. Taken at high levels, they may be harmful.

Tanning accelerators. The FDA says they don't work and may even be dangerous.

If you can spot it, you can stop it!

To detect the early warning signs of skin cancer, The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends a *head-to-toe self examination* at least every three months, along with a yearly skin exam by a physician. Be alert to any new growth, as well as changes in size, shape or color to brownish spots like freckles, birthmarks and moles.

Although any form of skin cancer can be serious, malignant melanoma is the deadliest. It accounts for only 3 percent of cases, yet causes more than 75 percent of deaths from skin cancer. Fortunately, if detected in its earliest stages (before it has spread to other parts of the body), melanoma is usually curable.

Learn the ABCDs of early protection:

See how to perform a self-exam at SkinCancer.org



Asymmetry

Although common moles are round or oval, most early melanomas are asymmetrical. Imagine a line through the middle – a melanoma would not create matching halves.



Border

The borders of early melanomas are often uneven and may have scalloped or ragged edges.



Color

Common moles are usually a single shade of brown. Look for varied shades of brown, tan or black; as melanomas progress, patches of red, blue and white may also appear.



Diameter

Common moles are about ¼ inch in diameter (about the size of a pencil eraser) or smaller, while early melanomas tend to grow larger.



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