



Sun Safety

Sun exposure is the main cause of skin cancer. However, exposure to small amounts of sunlight is also essential to good health. A balance is required between avoiding an increase in the risk of skin cancer by excessive sun exposure and achieving enough exposure to maintain adequate vitamin D levels.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. The two most common types of skin cancer are highly curable. However, melanoma, the third most common skin cancer, is more dangerous, especially among young people. Approximately 65%–90% of melanomas are caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light or sunlight.

According to the American Cancer Society over one million new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed each year in the United States.

People with certain risk factors are more likely than others to develop skin cancer. Risk factors vary for different types of skin cancer, but some general risk factors are having:

- A lighter natural skin color.
- Family history of skin cancer.
- A personal history of skin cancer.
- Exposure to the sun through work and play.
- A history of sunburns early in life.
- Skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily, or becomes painful in the sun.
- Blue or green eyes.
- Blond or red hair.
- Certain types and a large number of moles.

To help prevent skin cancer while still having fun outdoors, regularly use sun protective practices such as:

- **Seek shade**, especially during midday hours (10 a.m.–4 p.m.), when UV rays are strongest and do the most damage.
- **Cover up** with clothing to protect exposed skin. A long-sleeved shirt and long pants with a tight weave are best.

- **Get a hat** with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck.
- **Grab shades** that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible.
- **Rub on sunscreen** with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher, and both UVA and UVB protection.

It's always wise to choose more than one way to cover up when you're in the sun. Use sunscreen and put on a shirt... Seek shade and grab your sunglasses... Wear a hat, but rub on sunscreen too. Combining these sun protective actions helps protect your skin from the sun's damaging UV rays.

UV rays reach you on cloudy and hazy days, as well as bright and sunny days. UV rays will also reflect off any surface like water, cement, sand, and snow. Additionally, UV rays from artificial sources of light, like tanning beds, cause skin cancer and should be avoided.

Most forms of skin cancer can be cured. However, the best way to avoid skin cancer is to protect your skin from the sun. Happy Summer!

The information on this page was from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site unless otherwise stated. To learn more you may visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov. or the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org