

SUMMER SUN—PROTECT THE SKIN THAT PROTECTS YOU!

Summer has finally arrived! It is the season to go to the beach, swim, camp, barbeque with friends, or play outdoors. While this is the time of the year to be out in the sizzling sun, make sure to have fun with the proper safety precautions. According to the Surgeon General, 1 in 3 Americans get sunburned each year. Sunburns are a sign of overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays, a major cause of skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the United States, with an estimated 5 million people treated each year. July is UV Safety Awareness Month. Learn about how to protect yourself and your loved ones with UV safety.

About Skin

Did you know that the skin is your body's largest organ? Skin is your body's waterproof, protective coat. It helps with temperature regulation to keep you warm when it is cold and cool when it is hot. Skin also helps shield you from infection, injury, chemicals, and other foreign particles that could harm your body.

What are UV rays?

The sun supports life on our planet, but also exudes UV radiation that can be harmful. The sun's rays can cause premature aging, wrinkles, leathery skin, and skin cancer. They are also a proven human carcinogen, in other words, a cancer-causing agent. There are three main types of UV rays.

UVA	These rays are linked to causing skin damage by aging skin cells. They also cause wrinkles, sun spots, leathery skin, and are thought to increase risk of skin cancer.
UVB	These rays can damage skin cell's DNA directly and can cause sunburns and skin cancer.
UVC	These rays are absorbed by the Earth's ozone layer and are not known to cause cancer.

Skin Cancer Risk Factors

- Personal or family history of skin cancer
- Presence of numerous (more than 50) moles
- High or excessive exposure to UV radiation
- Fair skin (easily sunburned, natural red or blond hair)
- History of sunburns
- Weakened immune system or on immunosuppressant treatment

Do You Know Your ABCs?

Moles or brown spots on the skin are often harmless. However, they can also be a warning sign of serious forms of

skin cancer, such as melanoma. Identifying potential skin cancers early on can improve chances of successful treatment. Knowing the ABCs of melanoma can help you recognize suspicious lesions on your skin that may need attention from your physician. If you see one or more of these traits, make an appointment with your health care provider for further evaluation.

A	Asymmetry- two halves do not match
B	Border- uneven borders or edges
C	Color- having multiple colors/shades on a single mole or spot
D	Diameter- larger than ¼ inch diameter
E	Evolving- change in appearance, shape, color, or new symptom

How to Protect Yourself

Here are simple tips from the American Cancer Society on how to safeguard yourself from the harmful effects of UV radiation:

- 1) *Seek shade.* This is especially emphasized between the hours of 10am and 4pm, when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.
- 2) *Protect your skin with clothing.* Wear long sleeves, wide-brim hats, and long pants to cover and protect as much skin as possible.
- 3) *Use sunscreen daily.* It helps to filter out UV rays. Apply generously before going outside and reapply frequently, especially if out in the sun for prolonged periods. Use a sunscreen with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher and one that protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Wearing sunscreen not only helps decrease the risk of developing skin cancer, it can help prevent brown spots, skin discolorations, premature aging skin, and wrinkles.
- 4) *Avoid tanning beds.* Most skin doctors and health organizations recommend against using tanning beds. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, people who first use a tanning bed before age 35 increase their risk for developing melanoma by 75%.
- 5) *Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.* Wear 100% UVA- and UVB-absorption sunglasses. The longer the eyes are exposed, the greater the risk of developing cataracts or macular degeneration later in life.

Remember

Protection from UV radiation is important year round and under all weather conditions, not just during the summer or on sunny days.

For informational purposes only; not meant to supersede the advice of a physician.
If you have questions regarding this information, please consult your medical professional.