



Sun Safety and Preventing Skin Cancer

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Spring is here and summer is just around the corner. We welcome the outdoor activities that come with sunny weather but need to be informed on how we can protect our skin from sun damage and skin cancer.

Damage from the sun is the most preventable risk factor for all skin cancers. The American Academy of Dermatology has several recommendations for protecting your skin and reducing your risk of skin cancer.

1. Wear protective, loose-fitting clothing that covers as much skin as practical. This no longer means sacrificing comfort (overheating) for the extra coverage. There are many available fabrics that “breathe” and wick moisture away from the skin extremely well, keeping you cool and covered. Don’t forget a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
2. Apply broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen liberally with a SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 30 to all exposed skin, even on cloudy days. Broad-spectrum sunscreens provide protection from ultraviolet light rays type A and B (UVA and UVB). Read the label closely to make sure your sunscreen provides protection against both UVA and UVB. Reapply sunscreen roughly every two hours and sooner if swimming or sweating significantly. Don’t forget to apply sunscreen to any bald spots, the ears and the back of the neck. Most skin cancers occur on skin that has been exposed to the sun repeatedly over the years.
3. Seek shade whenever practical, whether under a shelter, beach umbrella or a tree. Remember that the sun’s rays are most intense from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Avoidance of sun damage not only helps prevent skin cancer but also wrinkles and other skin changes. Take extra care when around sand, snow or water, all of which reflect damaging solar rays.
4. Avoid tanning beds – even tanning salons that claim to use “only” UVA rays. Both UVA and UVB cause skin damage.
5. Check your skin regularly. If you notice anything that is changing in appearance, growing, bleeds or seems to heal slowly then you should see your doctor for a closer look. Don’t delay, as skin cancer is very treatable when detected early.

For more information, visit the [American Academy of Dermatology’s website](#), or the [American Academy of Family Physicians website](#).

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