

Sun Safety Tips

The most common cause of skin cancer is sun exposure. Sun can damage the skin with repeated exposure. This damage cannot be repaired. The ultra-violet A and B sun rays work together to cause tanning and burning and tanned skin is damaged skin. Damaged skin can lead to wrinkling, sagging, dryness, discoloration, and skin cancers.

Things to remember about sun and sun exposure:

- Sun coming through your car windows can damage your skin.
- Snow and ice can reflect 90% of the sun's rays.
- Sand, water and the concrete around pools reflect up to 85% of the sun's harmful rays into shaded places.
- White fabrics also reflect the sun.
- A wet T-shirt lets in almost as much light as bare skin.

How do I protect myself from skin damage?

- Try to stay out of the sun between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM when the sun's rays are the strongest. You will be able to avoid about 75% of the sun's most damaging rays.
- Wear protective, tightly woven clothing such as long-sleeved shirt and pants. If you can see light when holding fabric up to the light, sun can get in. If you are sun-sensitive, consider investing in sun-

Learn more about your health care.

- protective lightweight clothing. Ask a Dermatologist for details.
- Wear a tightly woven hat with a circular brim and sunglasses, even when walking short distances.
 - Avoid tanning parlors because their UV light causes premature aging and increased chance of skin cancer.
 - Apply a sunscreen / sunblock before sun exposure.

How do I choose a sunscreen / sunblock?

- Select a product with an adequate SPF factor that also blocks the full spectrum of UVA light. SPF ratings tell you how well the sunscreen shields against UVA rays which burn the skin and contribute to skin cancer. SPF of at least 15 offers the best protection. Longer more deeply penetrating UVA rays can cause deep structural damage, which can lead to wrinkles and set the stage for skin cancer. Ratings are not yet available to measure the degree of UVA protection you get. Read labels and choose a product with the best UVA blocker possible such as avobenzone (Parsol 1789), zinc oxide, oxybenzone, or titanium dioxide.
- Oil- free products are best for you if you are susceptible to breakouts. If a sunscreen causes stinging, itching, or a rash, try a fragrance-free formula that lists titanium dioxide or zinc oxide as an active ingredient.
- Avoid products that combine UV and insect protection in one bottle. Their sunscreen effectiveness may be reduced.
- Cosmetics combining UV protection plus moisturizer or foundation require a full teaspoon of the product on your face to provide adequate protection. Also, SPF's are not cumulative. In other words, a SPF 6 foundation on top of a SPF 8 moisturizer does not equal SPF 14, but just an 8.
- Keep babies younger than 6 months out of the sun. At 6 months, a product formulated for babies may be used, though sun exposure should be minimal.
- Certain medicines or cosmetics increase sensitivity to sun exposure.

How do I use the sunscreen?

- Apply sunscreen / sunblock at least 20 minutes before sun exposure, preferably in front of a mirror at home without your shirt on.
- It takes at least an ounce of sunscreen or block (a shot glass full) to properly cover the average adult.
- Don't forget the nose, entire neck, tops of feet, rims of ears, and the lips. Wax-based stick blocks are less messy and last longer on these areas.
- Reapply products liberally every 2 hours when outdoors, even on cloudy days. No matter what the label says, waterproof, (water-resistant, sweat-proof or all day protection) put on more sunscreen when it is windy, after being in the water, or working up a sweat.
- Keep sunscreen in handy places such as:
 - ▶ Purse
 - ▶ Backpack
 - ▶ Car glove compartment
 - ▶ Boat
 - ▶ Golf bag
 - ▶ Patio / deck
- Check expiration dates on sunscreen / sunblocks. Discard outdated products or anything from last season that is not dated or has changed consistency.

Check your skin

- Inspect your skin monthly. See handout The ABCD's of Melanoma and Skin Self-Exam. Tell your doctor about new or unusual bumps, spots, early lesions or changes in a mole.
- Have your skin checked by your doctor or dermatologist once every 3 years before age 40, and yearly after that. People at high risk for skin cancer may require even more frequent exams.

**Use a sunscreen regularly to help prevent skin cancer
Remember to use SPF 15 or greater**

Burn Patients should use *SPF 40* or greater

- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**