

SUN SAFETY

Sunscreen helps prevent skin burns, wrinkles and skin cancer. Although some people still believe in a "healthy tan", skin darkened by the sun is damaged. Exposure to the sun - even without a sunburn - is the leading risk factor for almost every case of skin cancer that is expected to be diagnosed this year.

USE A "BROAD SPECTRUM" SUNSCREEN with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 whenever you are outdoors to protect you from both ultraviolet B & A rays (UVB, UVA). UVB has long been considered the worst offender because it has been linked to skin cancer. Researchers now believe that UVA rays multiply the effects of UVB, or accelerate the growth of existing cancer cells. Repetitive, low dose exposure to UVA rays also causes skin wrinkles.

STAY OUT OF THE SUN BETWEEN 10 AM AND 4 PM when the sun's rays are the strongest. Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside, and reapply every 4-6 hours and after swimming. Keep infants out of the sun - sunscreen is not recommended for babies under six months. Consistent use of sunscreen before age 18 may reduce the lifetime risk of certain skin cancers by nearly 80 percent.

SHADE YOUR EYES. Sunglasses help protect your eyes from damage caused by exposure to the sun's rays. Eyes exposed to direct and indirect sunlight over many years are at increased risk of cataract development. Cataracts form slowly, blocking out more and more light.

MELANOMA ALERT!

More than two million Americans are diagnosed each year with skin cancer - over 90 percent will appear on sun exposed skin. Most skin cancers are basal cell or squamous cell carcinomas, which seldom become life threatening. Approximately 76,000 of all skin cancers will be diagnosed as melanoma. While less common, melanoma can be deadly if not found early and treated promptly.

Melanoma usually begins as a dark brown or black patch with irregular borders. It may start near a mole **or may appear anywhere on the body without warning**. It has a tendency to spread, making it essential to treat melanoma right away. Use the **ABCD METHOD** to help detect melanoma:

- A** asymmetrical (sides of the spot do not match)
- B** borders of melanomas are uneven
- C** color (varied shades of brown, tan, or black)
- D** diameter (early melanomas tend to grow larger than common moles)



Although these are useful warning signs, many melanomas and other skin cancers do **NOT** have the **ABCD** signs. Check your skin thoroughly once a month. Become familiar with your own pattern of freckles, moles and birthmarks. **When diagnosed early, melanoma can be cured.** If you see any changes in your skin, report them to your health care provider immediately.