



CANCERcare®

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Fact sheet

# Staying Safe in the Sun

The sun is an important part of our lives. Sunny days have a positive impact on our mood, increase our level of physical activity, make many social events and gatherings possible, and even benefit our health by providing our bodies with essential vitamin D. Unfortunately, sun exposure also presents risk factors that can lead to skin or eye damage, and even skin cancer.



Skin cancer is the most common of all cancer types. Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. **Prevention and early detection are the best ways to keep your skin healthy.** It's important to learn what you can do to protect yourself and how to spot any possible signs of skin cancer.

**Here are some easy ways to protect your skin from sun damage:**

**Wear sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.** If you have fair skin or light hair, you are more susceptible to the sun's rays and should use a sunscreen with a higher SPF.

**Choose sunscreen labeled "broad spectrum,"** meaning that it protects against two types of harmful rays: UVA and UVB.

**Use waterproof sunscreen** to make sure it stays on longer, even if you perspire or get wet.

**Reapply sunscreen often** – usually every two hours, but sooner if you've been swimming or are perspiring heavily.

**Cover your whole body.** Remember those areas that can be easy to forget, such as your ears, eyelids, lips, nose, hands, feet, and the top of your head.

**Seek shade or avoid the sun during the peak hours of 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.** The sun is strongest during those hours, even on cloudy days.

**Wear a hat with a wide brim** to help shade your eyes, ears and head.

**Wear wrap-around sunglasses that provide 100% UV protection** to safeguard your eyes.

**Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothing that protects a larger area of your skin,** such as long-sleeve shirts or long pants. Tightly woven fabrics in dark or bright colors are best.

## EXAMINING YOUR SKIN

Get a professional skin examination from a dermatologist once a year, and learn how to perform a monthly self-examination. Skin self-exams do not require any special medical equipment. All you need are your eyes, a mirror, and the knowledge of what to look for. Here are some tips:

- Perform skin self-examinations in a well-lit room in front of a full-length mirror. Use a handheld mirror for hard-to-see places.
- Learn the pattern of your moles, freckles or other birthmarks so that you will notice any changes.
- Look for new growths, spots, bumps or sores that do not heal normally.
- Don't forget hard-to-see areas of your body such as your head, the underside of your arms, the backs of your legs, and between your toes.
- Know the "ABCDs" of moles.

**A**symmetrical: Is the mole oddly shaped?

**B**order: Does the mole have irregular or vaguely defined borders?

**C**olor: Does the mole have uneven coloring or multiple colors?

**D**iameter: Is the mole larger than a pencil eraser or is it growing in size?

If you have any moles that fit those criteria, ask your doctor to check them out.



## A MESSAGE FROM **CANCERcare** for

**BABIES** under 6 months old should never be exposed to the sun. Cover their skin and feet protectively. To protect their head and face, choose a wide-brimmed hat or bonnet, and use a stroller with a canopy or hood.

**CHILDREN** need to be active. Activities like playing outdoors are vital to their physical health. As a parent, you can make sun safety just as important. Always apply sunscreen as part of your child's "getting ready to play" rituals. Encourage shade-friendly activities during peak sun hours.

**TEENAGERS** are under pressure to conform in many ways. Tanning can be one of those expectations. Help your child understand that tanning is unsafe. Teach your teenagers about self-tanners, keep the sunscreen bottle in view, and make sure a bottle is included in their outdoor sports bags.

**Remember, you are your children's role model, so let them see you protecting yourself from the sun.**

*Sun safety tips were adapted from guidelines by the American Cancer Society and the Skin Cancer Foundation.*



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