



## July 2015 Sun Safety

Skin cancer affects more than 1 million Americans every year, and exposure to the sun causes over 90% of skin cancer cases in the United States.

### Skin Cancer: Are You Safe in the Sun?

Many people describe sun-tanned skin as having a “healthy glow,” but that’s not exactly the truth. There is no such thing as a safe, healthy tan.

### Sun Damage

Any type of suntan is the result of sun damage caused by the exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Other types of sun damage include wrinkles, age spots, freckles, tough or leathery skin, dilated blood vessels, sunburns and skin cancer.

The sun emits two types of UV radiation: UVA (which causes aging) and UVB (which causes burning). Both UVA and UVB rays are undetectable to a person sitting in the sun (you cannot feel them on your skin) and are damaging on cool, cloudy days as well as sunny days. In addition, both types of radiation cause skin cancer.

### Skin Cancer

People are most susceptible to skin cancer when they are exposed to sudden, short bursts of sunlight while in places where the sunlight is strong, such as near the equator or at high altitudes.

The following characteristics place people at an even higher risk of developing skin cancer:

- Having a large number of moles on the skin
- Being a redhead or blonde, and/or having blue eyes, fair skin and freckles
- Difficulty tanning and skin that is easily burned
- A family history of skin cancer
- Taking medication that increases sun sensitivity

### Preventing Sun Damage

Avoiding excessive sun exposure and sunburns is the best way to protect yourself from sun damage and skin cancer. Here are a few tips to help keep you safe in the sun:

- Stay out of the sun when it is strongest: between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear clothes with tightly woven fabric and a hat that shades your face, neck and ears.
- Wear sunglasses whenever you are outside to avoid developing cataracts and damaging your retinas.
- Use sunscreen that has at least an SPF of 15 every day, especially on your lips and the tips of your ears and nose.
- Avoid using tanning beds—they are just as damaging as the sun.
- Protect children from sun damage—most sun exposure occurs before the age of 18.

Routinely inspect your skin for any changes, and if you suspect that a spot on your skin is new or has changed color or appearance, consult a dermatologist.

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