



HealthyPeople

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION • AND EARLY DETECTION

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. In fact, **more skin cancers are diagnosed in the US each year than all other cancers combined.** The number of skin cancer cases has been going up over the past few decades. Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. Most of this exposure comes from the sun, but some may come from man-made sources, such as indoor tanning beds and sun lamps. **The good news is that you can do a lot to protect yourself and your family from UV rays,** as well as to catch skin cancer early so that it can be treated effectively. You don't need x-rays or blood tests to find skin cancer early – just your eyes and a mirror. If you have skin cancer, finding it early is the best way to make sure it can be treated with success.

HOW TO I PROTECT MYSELF FROM UV RAYS?

People who get a lot of exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays are at greater risk for skin cancer. Sunlight is the main source of UV rays, but you don't have to avoid the sun completely. And it would be unwise to stay inside if it would keep you from being active, because physical activity is important for good health. But getting too much sun can be harmful. There are some steps you can take to limit your exposure to UV rays. Some people think about sun protection only when they spend a day at the lake, beach, or pool. But sun exposure adds up day after day, and it happens every time you are in the sun.

Simply staying in the shade is one of the best ways to limit your UV exposure. If you are going to be in the sun, **"Slip! Slop! Slap!® and Wrap"** is a catchphrase that can help you remember some of the key steps you can take to protect yourself from UV rays:

- Slip on a shirt.
- Slop on sunscreen.
- Slap on a hat.
- Wrap on sunglasses to protect the eyes and skin around them.



HOW TO STAY SAFE IN THE SUN

SEEK SHADE!

An obvious but very important way to limit your exposure to UV light is to avoid direct sunlight too long—particularly between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm, when UV light is strongest. If you are unsure how strong the sun's rays are, use the shadow test: if your shadow is shorter than you are, the sun's rays are the strongest, and it's important to protect yourself.

PROTECT YOUR SKIN WITH CLOTHING

When you are out in the sun, wear clothing to cover your skin. Clothes provide different levels of UV protection. Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, or long skirts cover the most skin and are the most protective. Dark colors generally provide more protection than light colors. A tightly woven fabric protects better than loosely woven clothing. Dry fabric is generally more protective than wet fabric.

USE SUNSCREEN

It's important to know that sunscreen is just a filter – it does not block all UV rays. Consider sunscreen as one part of your skin cancer protection plan, especially if staying in the shade and wearing protective clothing aren't available as your first options. Sunscreens with broad spectrum protection and with SPF values of 30 or higher are recommended.

WEAR A HAT

A hat with at least a 2- to 3-inch brim all around is ideal because it protects areas that are often exposed to intense sun, such as the ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.

WEAR SUNGLASSES THAT BLOCK UV RAYS

UV-blocking sunglasses are important for protecting the delicate skin around the eyes, as well as the eyes themselves. Long hours in the sun without protecting your eyes increase your chances of developing certain eye diseases.