



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. Sun exposure is almost solely responsible for nearly 1 million cases of skin cancer that are 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. Reapply sunscreen every 4-6 hours and after swimming. Keep infants out of the sun, as sunscreens are not recommended for babies under six months. Protect older babies and children with waterproof sunscreen, T-shirts and brimmed hats, hooded strollers and/or a large umbrella. Consistent use of sunscreen on children 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 one 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 60,000 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 and is characterized by the uncontrolled growth of pigment producing cells. 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** most early melanomas are asymmetrical (sides of the spot do not match)
- B** borders of melanomas are uneven
- C** color (varied shades of brown, tan, or black are often the first sign of melanoma)
- 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.

