



Sun Safety



Altru[®]
Health System

HERE FOR LIFE

SUN SAFETY

The risk of skin cancer today is much greater than it was 20 years ago.

The main reason for this is our "outdoor" lifestyle. We spend more time working and playing outdoors, often without proper sun protection. We are exposed to more ultraviolet rays because the protective layer of ozone around the earth has become thinner, due to the effects of pollution and chemicals.

Anyone born today has a 1 in 7 risk of developing skin cancer during his or her lifetime.

Scientists have found a strong link between exposure to direct and reflected sunlight and a number of health risks. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation, a component of sunlight, causes damage to the skin and increases the risk of skin cancer. UV radiation come in two forms: ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB). UVB is the radiation sunscreens are designed to screen out. Manufacturers can claim protection against "broad spectrum" radiation if their product contains one of the following ingredients: benzophenone, oxybenzone, sulisobenzene, titanium dioxide, zinc oxide, and butyl ethoxydibenzolmethane (also called avobenzone and known by trade name Parson 1789).

How do sunscreens work?

Most sun protection products work by absorbing, reflecting, or scattering the sun's rays. Such products contain chemicals that interact with the skin to protect it from UV rays. **Keep in mind that sunscreen is not meant to allow you to spend more time in the sun than you would otherwise.** That's why it is important to complement sunscreen use with other sun protection options: cover up, wear a hat and sunglasses, and seek shade.

The Risk of Skin Cancer Is Higher For People Who:

- ☀️ Have light-colored skin, eyes and hair
- ☀️ Work, play or exercise in the sun for long periods of time
- ☀️ Had several blistering sunburns as a child.
- ☀️ Have a family history of skin cancer.

Sun Sense Guidelines

- 1. Reduce sun exposure between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.**
The sun's rays are the strongest between 11am and 4 p.m. If you can, plan your outdoor activities before or after this time. It's easy to remember this time- during this time your shadow is shorter than you are.
- 2. Seek shade or create your own shade**
When you are outside, especially between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., try to stay in the shade. Be prepared for places without any shade by taking along an umbrella. With an umbrella you can create shade wherever you need it!
- 3. Slip! On clothing to cover your arms and legs.**
Covering your skin will protect it from the sun. Choose clothing that is loose fitting tightly woven and lightweight.
- 4. Slap! On a wide-brimmed hat.**
Most skin cancers occur on the face and neck, so this area needs extra protection. Wear a hat with a wide brim that covers your head, face, ears and neck. Hats without a wide brim, like baseball caps, do not give you enough protection. If you choose a baseball cap, remember to protect you ears and neck with sunscreen.
- 5. Slop! On a sunscreen with SPF #15 or higher.**
Sunscreens are rated by a sun protection factor, or SPF, which is a multiplier of the amount of time the skin can be exposed to the sun before experiencing sunburn. Use a sunscreen with a SPF of #15 or higher. Look for "broad

spectrum" on the label. This means that the sunscreen offers protection against two types of ultraviolet rays, UV-A and UV-B. Apply sunscreen generously, 20 minutes before outdoor activities. Reapply frequently, at least every two hours and after swimming and exercising which makes you perspire. No sunscreen can absorb all of the sun's rays. While sunscreens protect against sunburn, they do not necessarily prevent skin cancer. Even when a person uses sunscreen for the purpose of spending more time in the sun, the skin can still collect damaging radiation. Use sunscreen along with shade, clothing and hats, not instead of them.

- 6. Keep babies less than one year out of the direct sun.**
Babies need extra protection because their skin is very sensitive. It is best to keep young babies out of direct sunlight. Keep your child's stroller, playpen or carriage in the shade. It is also recommended that even young children wear sunglasses that are designed as providing protection from UV radiation. Although many children may want to play outdoors wearing little clothing, parents should encourage them to keep as much skin area covered by clothing as possible. To protect children from the damaging effects of the sun, apply sunscreens with an SPF of at least 15 and encourage them to wear hats with visors.
- 7. Tanning booths and sunlamps are not a safe way to tan.**
Tanning booths use UVA radiation which is a longer wavelength of light as compared to UVB. UVA usually doesn't cause immediate burn, however, this doesn't mean its less dangerous. Actually, UVA light penetrates into the skin more deeply and will prematurely age the skin faster. UVA sensitizes the skin so sunlight will be more likely to cause skin cancers. If you're taking antibiotics, tranquilizers, antihistamines, birth control pills, or oral diabetes medication, you may have side effects with exposure to UVA light. Federal guidelines require that you wear protective goggles at the salons, but this point isn't enforced very strongly and closing your eyes isn't enough. Cataract and retina damage could occur. Tanning booths are far from safe!

What else should be part of my sun protection plan?

Wear sunglasses

UV rays have been found to be associated with various eye conditions, such as cataracts. Sunglasses help prevent damage to your eyes by blocking a large amount of ultraviolet rays. Keep your "shades" on, and have your children wear them too!

Don't forget your lips!

Look for lip balm with SPF 30 or higher to protect your lips from the sun.

Sunburn treatment

All first degree burns, like sunburns, should be immersed in cold water for 10-15 minutes or apply cold compresses. If you're burned all over your body, try adding oatmeal or cornstarch to a cold bath and soak in it. The oatmeal soothes that skin and reduces inflammation. Baby oil or after-sun screens seal in the heat, so don't use these. You may want to use a cooling lotion or lotion that contains benzocaine. These work on nerve endings in the skin and may provide temporary relief.

How can I tan safely? (Hint: You can't!)

A tanned color is caused by the increase in melanin in your skin. The more you're exposed to the sun the more melanin is produced. Melanin absorbs UV radiation and helps to protect the body against ultraviolet radiation. People who are not dark-skinned to begin with and are getting constant UV light can get skin damage and skin cancer. Therefore, no tanning is safe. Remember that UV light is cumulative and thus the sun exposure you get at age ten can affect you adversely at age thirty-five. Also, the long term affects of "tan in a tube" products are unknown, so please use with caution.

UV index

The National Weather Service and the Environmental Protection Agency developed the UV index. It provides a forecast of the expected risk of overexposure to UV rays and indicates the degree of caution you should take when working, playing or exercising outdoors.

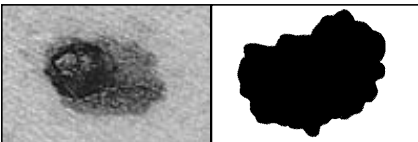
ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION INDEX NUMBER	
US Weather UV Index	Exposure Level
0-2	Minimal
3-4	Low
5-6	Moderate
7-8	High
9-10+	Very High

Check your skin regularly

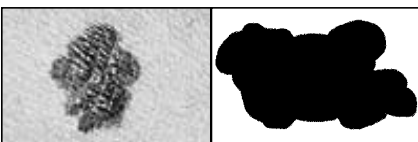
Most skin cancers can be cured, if caught early enough. Get to know your skin! Know the location and appearance of birthmarks and moles. Check your skin monthly so you can detect any changes. The best time to do this exam is after a bath or shower. Use a full length and hand held mirror so you can check your skin from head to toe.

Almost everyone has moles. The vast majority of moles are perfectly harmless. A change in a mole's appearance is a sign that you should see your doctor. Here's a simple ABCD rule to help you remember the important signs:

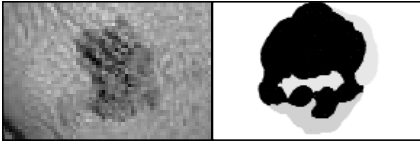
Consult your doctor immediately if any of your moles or pigmented spots exhibit:



A. Asymmetry - one half unlike the other half.



B. Border irregular - scalloped or poorly circumscribed border.



C. **Color varied** from one area to another; shades of tan and brown, black; sometimes white, red or blue.



D. **Diameter larger** than 6 mm as a rule (diameter of a pencil eraser).

See your doctor right away if you notice:

- ☀ Change in color, especially multiple shades of dark brown or black; red, white and blue
- ☀ Change or spreading of color from the edge of the mole into surrounding skin
- ☀ Change in size, especially sudden or continuous enlargement
- ☀ Change in shape, especially development of irregular margins or border.
- ☀ Change in elevation, especially sudden elevation of a previously flat mole
- ☀ Change in surface texture of a mole, especially scaliness, erosion, oozing, crusting, ulceration or bleeding
- ☀ Change in the surrounding skin, especially redness, swelling, or new moles
- ☀ Change in sensation, especially itching, tenderness or pain.
- ☀ A sore that does not heal

Basically, any mole or growth that is *CHANGING* needs to be checked by your doctor. Have your doctor check any area that you are concerned about. Only a doctor can tell you if the changes are normal or not.



H E R E F O R L I F E

P.O. Box 6002 Grand Forks, ND 58206-6002

www.altru.org