

Wellness News

Tips to stay healthy throughout the year
Issue VII ■ July 2021: Beat the Heat & Sun Safety



Beat the Heat this Summer

With the world somewhat returning to a sense of “normal”, the natural inclination will be to want to be out and about with friends & family to make up for lost time. But while reengaging socially is likely to yield nothing but positivity, it is more important than ever to remember to embrace caution when it comes to your fun in the sun outings. The toll the sun can take on your skin, if unprotected, can be devastating down the road.

Skin Cancer

Nearly 5 million people are treated for skin cancer each year in the United States. Skin cancer can be serious, expensive, and sometimes even deadly.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. Some people are at [higher risk](#) of skin cancer than others, but anyone can get it.

Common Types of Skin Cancer

The two most common types of skin cancer are basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas. These cancers are most often found in areas exposed to the sun, such as the head, neck, and arms, but they also can occur elsewhere. They are very common but are also usually very treatable.

Melanoma, the third most common skin cancer, is more dangerous and causes the most deaths.

A change in your skin is the most common sign of skin cancer. This could be a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a change in a [mole](#).

How to detect? Use the A-B-C-D-Es

The first five letters of the alphabet are a guide to help you recognize the warning signs of melanoma:

- **“A”** stands for asymmetrical. Does the mole or spot have an irregular shape with two parts that look very different?
- **“B”** stands for border. Is the border irregular or jagged?
- **“C”** is for color. Is the color uneven?
- **“D”** is for diameter. Is the mole or spot larger than the size of a pea?
- **“E”** is for evolving. Has the mole or spot changed during the past few weeks or months?

Risk Factors

A risk factor is anything that raises your risk of getting a disease. Having a risk factor, or even many risk factors, does not mean that you will get skin cancer but does increase the likelihood of it.

It is important to understand the risk factors so that you can take action to lower your risk and find potential issues earlier when they are easier to treat. Risk factors for skin cancer include:

- Ultraviolet (UV) light exposure
- Fair skin and light hair
- Family or personal history of skin cancer
- Having moles and/or freckles
- Being older or Male
- Exposure to certain chemicals or radiation
- Long-term or severe skin inflammation or injury
- Weakened immune system
- Smoking

If you notice any of these warning signs, or anything New, Changing, or Unusual; talk to your doctor promptly.

Take Action to Prevent Sun Damage

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can damage your skin in as little as 15 minutes. Check the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's UV Index](#) for your area and follow these recommendations to help protect yourself and your family.

- Seek Shade, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM.
- Wear protective clothing: long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Wide-brim hats
- Sunglasses to protect your eyes
- Broad spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15
- Avoid using tanning beds and sunlamps
- Protect children from the sun
- Watch for abnormal moles
- Check yourself: examine your skin head-to-toe once a month.
- When in doubt, check it out: Follow your instincts and visit your doctor if you see a spot that doesn't look right.
- See your dermatologist at least once a year
- If you've had melanoma, follow up regularly with your doctor once treatment is complete. Stick to the schedule your doctor recommends.

Sun-Safe Strategies for Work

Skin cancer and sun damage can greatly reduce workforce productivity. Promoting and encouraging sun protection, especially for outdoor workers, can help create a healthy and safe environment for you and your coworkers.

Here are some ways you can bring sun safety into the workplace to improve output and efficiency.

- Encourage and provide sun protection.
- Schedule breaks in the shade and allow reapplication of sunscreen during shifts.
- Modify worksites by increasing the amount of available shade and decreasing UV reflection.
- Creating work schedules that minimize sun exposure, when possible.
- Add sun safety to workplace policies and training:
 - Include sun-safety information in workplace wellness programs.
 - Teach outdoor workers about risks of exposure to UV radiation and signs and symptoms of overexposure.
 - Encourage outdoor workers to be role models and discuss the importance of sun protection with patrons, clients, and coworkers.

Resources

- [Self-Exams](#) Save Lives: Early detection starts with you
- [Be SunSmart](#): Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap. Protect your skin and eyes from the sun's damaging rays (UV radiation).
- [Choose Sun-safety Strategies that work](#): Broad spectrum sunscreen and shade, clothing, wide brim hat, and sunglasses.
- Show us your [#SunSafeSelfie](#) and join the conversation to raise awareness about the benefits of sun protection!
- Visit the National Cancer Institute's [RTIPs](#) website to find more information about sun safety programs for outdoor worksites.