

Health Check

MAY 2018

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May is skin cancer awareness month

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer occurring in the United States, affecting women and men equally. Repeated sun exposure causes genetic alternations in the thin, outermost level of your skin that can lead to skin cancers, including melanoma, the deadliest form.

Skin cancers usually develop on sun-exposed areas, such as the face, ears, neck, scalp, shoulders, and upper back. But can also occur on your hands, soles of feet, between fingers and toes, and under your nails.

Protect your skin

Your skin is your body's largest organ. Help protect it by taking these precautions:

- **Use sunscreen.** Wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against ultraviolet A and B rays and provides a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Apply liberally 20-30 minutes before exposure; reapply every two hours and after swimming.
- **Avoid direct sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.**
- **Dress sun-smart.** Wear sunglasses, wide-brimmed hat and a long-sleeved shirt – such as the fishing shirts found in sports apparel stores – when outdoors for extended periods.
- **Wear sun protection even on overcast days.** UV rays travel 93 million miles to Earth, penetrate clouds, and can deliver damaging sunburns.
- **Avoid tanning beds.** They can deliver a concentrated flow of UV rays seven times stronger than the midday sun.
- **African-Americans can sunburn, too.** All ethnicities should take precautions against sunburns.
- **For sunburn,** apply cool compresses and aloe vera gel on the affected areas. If severely sunburned, see a doctor.
- **See a dermatologist** for annual skin checks, or right away if you notice sudden changes in existing moles, freckles, bumps, or birthmarks.



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Protect kids

Children have extra sensitive skin. Just a few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life. Kids don't have to be at a pool or beach to need protection. Their skin needs protection from the sun's harmful UV rays whenever they're outdoors.

