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Summer is here and as always, it is important to protect our skin from UV exposure and sun damage.

Ultraviolet (UV) rays are an invisible kind of radiation that comes from the sun, tanning beds and sunlamps. UV rays can penetrate and change skin cells.



There are three types of UV rays:

- UVA: penetrates deep into skin and causes browning or aging skin and wrinkles. UVA rays damage connective tissue and increase a person's risk of skin cancer. UVA penetrates through car window glass.

- UVB: rays don't reach as far into the skin as UVA rays, but still cause damage.
- UVC: these rays are very dangerous, but are absorbed by the ozone layer and do not reach the ground.

Too much exposure to UV rays causes skin to age prematurely, and may lead to skin cancer.

To protect skin from UV exposure and reduce the risk of skin cancer:

1. Apply sunscreen.

When you are going out, even on a cloudy day, apply sunscreen to all exposed skin. Reapply every 2 hours. No sun-screen is completely waterproof or sweat proof, nor does it last all day.

There are two broad types of sunscreen:

- a. Physical blocks, which uses Titanium dioxide and zinc oxide in micronized forms.
- b. Chemical sunscreen. The best chemical sunscreen is Anthelios XL SPF 50+. Although it is not available in the U.S., Anthelios XL SPF 50+ is available in Europe and can be purchased online through Amazon.

Chemical sunscreen can burn eyes while micronized Titanium dioxide and zinc oxide do not. It is more prudent to use physical sun blocks in infants and children. Be extra protective near water and snow as they intensify and reflect damaging sun rays.

2. Cover up: Sun protection clothing typically covers a maximum amount of skin yet is designed to be cool and comfortable to wear. It is also very reliable - providing consistent and constant UV protection. It reduces the amount of sunscreen needed on exposed areas & protection is provided for both UVA and UVB.

3. Seek shade. UV rays are strongest and most harmful during mid-day, so avoid sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

4. Take a hat. Wear hats with wide brims that shade the face, scalp, ears, and neck.

5. Wear sunglasses. Wrap-around sunglasses that block close to 100 percent of both UVA and UVB rays are recommended. Proper sunglasses can protect your eyes from UV rays, which are able to cause cataracts later in life.

6. Boost your Vitamin D: Eat a healthy diet that includes foods which are naturally rich in Vitamin D, such as fish, cod liver oil and eggs, or take Vitamin D supplements.

7. Tan wisely: If you want to tan, consider self-tanning products. Using a tanning bed, booth or sunlamp to get tan is called "indoor tanning." Indoor tanning has been linked to skin cancers including melanoma, cancers of the eye (ocular melanoma) and squamous cell carcinoma.

8. Have an annual skin examination. Your first line of defense against skin cancer is prevention, but early detection can ensure that when skin cancer does strike, you receive the best possible outcome from treatment.

For those who have further questions, they should contact a health care provider.