

Summer Wellness!

SKIN PROTECTION

UV radiation, be it from the sun or a tanning bed, damages the structure of skin cells. To make matters worse, the thinning of the Earth's protective ozone layer is believed to amplify UV radiation levels. Using sunscreen helps filter out most of these harmful UV rays.

Protect yourself

- During all outdoor activities, including gardening, playing sports, walking and jogging, as well as going to the beach, use sunscreen.
- Sunscreens work best when applied liberally to all exposed skin, about 20 minutes before sun exposure, and reapplied every two hours or after swimming or sweating.
- Don't miss the backs of your hands, and don't be fooled by an overcast day. UV light penetrates clouds and can still harm unprotected skin.
- In addition to sunscreen, wearing a wide-brimmed hat — and staying in the shade — offers added protection.

Choosing a sunscreen

Look for broad-spectrum products that protect against both UVA and UVB rays. And be sure they have an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. Many experts recommend an SPF of 30 or higher.

Don't use sunscreen on babies younger than 6 months old. Keep them covered up and in the shade instead. If staying completely out of the sun isn't possible, use a small amount of sunscreen on exposed areas, such as the face and the backs of the hands. Be sure to read and follow the directions on the label. If you have questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

LOOK HERE — TO HELP SPOT SKIN CANCER

Well, check you out!

No, seriously. Take a look at your skin. Check it. All of it. See anything unusual? Any new spots? Any moles that look different than you remember?

Knowing how your skin normally looks is the first step to spotting a potential problem. And that's a good thing. Skin cancer is highly treatable when caught early, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Take a good, long look

The key to a good skin check is thoroughness. Inspect your skin on a regular basis. Area by area, look at your:

- Trunk — front, back and both sides
- Face, neck, ears and scalp
- Fingernails, palms, and upper and lower arms
- Legs, buttocks and genital area
- Feet, including toenails, soles and between the toes

Some areas, like the scalp, can be difficult to check by yourself. Use a handheld mirror for those hard-to-see areas — or ask a loved one to help you out.

Look for moles that are different or changing — or that itch or bleed. See your doctor if you notice anything out of the ordinary.

Who's looking?

Everyone should keep an eye out for skin changes. Fair-skinned people are at higher risk of skin cancer — but anyone can get it.

- Let your doctor know if you have any of these risk factors:
- A large number of moles — or large, flat moles with irregular shapes
- Past sunburns, especially in childhood
- A personal or family history of skin cancer
- Prior artificial sunlight use, such as tanning beds

4 ways to help lower your risk

One of the best ways to help protect against skin cancer is to limit sun exposure. When venturing outdoors, you should:

1. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. Many experts recommend an SPF of 30 or higher. Be sure to read and follow the directions on the label.
2. Wear sunglasses that protect your eyes from both UVA and UVB rays.
3. Cover up with long sleeves and pants — and choose a hat with a wide brim.
4. Seek shade on sunny days, especially when the sun is most intense — usually between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.