



Quick Steps to Skin Cancer Prevention

You should never get sunburned as sunburn increases the risk of skin cancer. The risk for sunburn is increased for:

- Persons with fair skin, blue eyes and red or blond hair.
- Persons taking some medications including sulfa drugs, tetracyclines and some diuretics.
- Persons exposed to industrial UV light sources.
- Persons exposed to excessive outdoor sunlight.

Protect yourself from the sun's UV rays by:

- Avoiding, when possible, outdoor activities during midday, when the sun's rays are strongest. In Arkansas this usually means the hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Apply sunscreen and lipscreen to exposed body areas. As a rule of thumb, you should always use a broad-spectrum sunscreen for blocking UVA as well as UVB rays and lipscreen with at least Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 15. Higher numbers indicate more protection. Reapply sunscreen according to manufacturers' directions, especially during peak sun hours or after swimming or exercising.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing made from tightly woven fabric to cover and protect your skin. A typical t-shirt, while more practical than long-sleeved shirts and pants in some situations, offers less protection than the recommended SPF 15. A wet t-shirt offers much less protection than a dry one. Use a sunscreen with at least SPF 15 with t-shirts and clothes made with loosely woven fabrics.
- Wear a hat with a brim. If you wear a baseball cap, you should protect the back of your neck and your ears by using sunscreen with at least SPF 15, wearing other clothing or staying in the shade when possible.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes and reduce the risk of cataracts. Wrap-around lenses work best because they also protect the tender skin around the eyes from sun exposure.
- Seek shade. You can reduce your risk of skin damage and skin cancer by seeking shade under an umbrella, tree or other shelter. Seek shade before – not after – you need relief from the sun.

Avoid tanning beds and tan-accelerating agents. Tanning beds emit UVA rays, which are often touted as less dangerous than UVB rays. But UVA light penetrates deeper into your skin, causes precancerous skin lesions and increases your risk of skin cancer. As for suntan-accelerating products, the Food and Drug Administration warns against their use.

Check your skin regularly and report changes to your doctor. Examine your skin at least every 3 months, looking for the development of new skin growths or changes in existing moles, freckles, bumps and birthmarks. With the help of mirrors, check your face, neck, ears and scalp. Examine your chest and trunk, and the tops and undersides of your arms and hands. Examine both the front and the back of your legs, and your feet, including your soles and the spaces between your toes. Also check your genital area, including between your buttocks.

Let's also remember the little folks. According to the American Cancer Society, people receive up to 80 percent of their life's total exposure to UV light by the age of 18. Start early in promoting a healthy attitude about sun protection for your kids.

Here are some everyday actions from the American Cancer Society you can take now to safeguard the children in your care against the dangers of the sun. **Remember:** Sun exposure occurs day after day, so think about protection from UV every day, even when it's hazy or cloudy.

- Take care when planning your children's activities. The best way to avoid UV exposure is to limit time in the sun, especially between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- Encourage kids to play in the shade.
- Whenever possible, plan outdoor activities so as not to be in the sun during the middle of the day.
- When your kids are outdoors, be sure their skin is protected. UV rays reflect off water, sand, snow and any light-colored surface, like concrete. UV rays also reach below the water's surface.
- Encourage your kids to wear clothing that protects as much skin as possible from the sun. Make it fun to wear hats that completely shade their faces, necks and ears. To protect arms, legs and body, choose comfortable clothing made of tightly woven fabrics that you can't see through when held up to the light. Dark colors provide more protection than light colors.
- Use sunscreen every day on skin that is not protected by clothing or a hat. Choose a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. Sunscreen is not recommended for children less than 6 months old. Keep infants in the shade and covered up with comfortable clothing.



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