

# Sun Safety

Summer is almost here – the days are longer and warmer, which means you have more time to get outside and do the activities you enjoy. Spending more time outdoors is part of a healthy, active lifestyle, but it's important to protect yourself from excessive exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays which can be dangerous.

Over a million skin cancers are diagnosed in the United States each year. That's more than cancers of the prostate, breast, lung, colon, uterus, ovaries, and pancreas combined. The good news is that there is a lot you can do to protect yourself from excessive sun exposure. The following tips will help minimize your risk for skin cancer:

**Limit direct sun exposure during midday.** UV rays are most intense between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm. Plan your outdoor activities outside that timeframe, if possible.

**Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps.** Tanning devices give out UVA and frequently UVB rays, as well. Both UVA and UVB rays can cause serious long-term skin damage, and both contribute to skin cancer.

**Wear sunglasses, a hat and protective clothing.** Invest in a wide-brimmed hat to protect your face and a pair of wrap-around sunglasses with at least 99% UV absorption. If you are going to be outside for an extended period of time, cover your arms and legs with lightweight clothing.

**Use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.** The SPF number indicates the level of protection against UVB rays, which prevents sun burn. Sunscreens labeled "broad spectrum" also protect against UVA rays, which lead to skin cancer. SPF 15 protects 90% of UVB rays and SPF 30 protects about 97% of UVB rays. There is not much benefit above SPF 30. Look for a sunscreen that also protects against UVA rays.

Use 1 ounce of sunscreen (a "palmful") to cover your arms, legs, neck, and face. Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours -- more often if you are swimming or sweating. Choose a lip balm with SPF to protect your lips as well. Remember, to use sunscreen even if it's cloudy and overcast because UV light still comes through on hazy days. Go to [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org) <<http://www.ewg.org>> to find out which sunscreens are best and which ones could actually be harmful.

**Check your skin.** Check your own skin regularly, and have your doctor check it, too -- especially if you notice any moles that have changed size, shape, or color. Skin cancer is most easily treated if found early.

To learn more about how you can decrease your risk of skin cancer, visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

Source: American Cancer Society

Mary Kelly  
MS, RD, CD, CDE  
[www.sensiahealthcare.com](http://www.sensiahealthcare.com)  
[mkelly@sensiahealthcare.com](mailto:mkelly@sensiahealthcare.com)

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Sensia Healthcare  
[www.sensiahealthcare.com](http://www.sensiahealthcare.com)  
(414) 359-0800



*For more information regarding Sensia Healthcare's Wellness Programs, contact John Lerand at 414-359-9440 or email him at: [jlerand@sensiahealthcare.com](mailto:jlerand@sensiahealthcare.com).*