

Preventing Skin Cancer

Many people love the sun — especially at this time of the year. The sun can actually be good for you, giving you a healthy dose of Vitamin D. But too much sun can have consequences, since too much sun can put you at risk for skin cancer. (Yes, in case you're wondering, tanning booths also put you at risk.)

The good news is that using sunscreen can protect you from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends sunscreen that offers broad-spectrum protection (protects against UVA and UVB rays) of SPF 30 or higher.

The other important thing you can do is to simply be aware. Skin cancers often start as changes to your skin. It's a good idea to:

- Examine your skin every month. Notice any moles, spots or freckles you have and watch for any changes.
- See a dermatologist for a "full body check" every three years, beginning at age 20 and every year after age 40.

If you're fair-skinned, be especially vigilant. An estimated 40% – 50% of fair-skinned people who live to be at least 65 years old will develop at least one type of skin cancer.

Learn to spot the early warning signs. Your annual exam is a great time to ask your primary care physician about prevention. Skin cancer is highly treatable and usually can be cured if it's found in the early stages.



WHEN THE SUN'S NOT SO FUN

The Dangers of UV Radiation Overexposure

It doesn't matter how dark or fair skinned you are, the effects and dangers of the sun and UV radiation are the same for us all. Take these steps to help yourself before the damage becomes permanent:

- Wear UV-A/UV-B rated sunglasses.
- Stay covered or use sunblock any time you are exposed.
- Visit your doctor at the first sign of irregular growths or obvious harm to your skin. Even if you can't see or feel the damage, it may be there, deep under the skin. Take these easy precautions and go enjoy the outdoors.