

## Reduce the Risk of Skin Cancer

It's easier to ask for permission than to beg forgiveness. Similarly, it is easier to practice prevention than it is to find a cure, particularly when you're faced with the prospect of developing skin cancer.

Practicing smart sun habits to reduce the risk of skin cancer is much better than trying to deal with the ravages of this terrible disease. The worry and pain involved with both diagnosis and treatment far outweigh the minor inconvenience of applying sunscreen. Of course, life offers no guarantees, but a few simple steps will go a long way to reduce the risk of skin cancer.

### Avoid Direct Sunlight

One key method of preventing skin cancer is by avoiding direct sunlight during the peak hours between 11 am and 3 pm. The sun's rays are at their most powerful degrees during this time frame.

### Cover Up

If you must be outside for any length of time during these peak hours, be sure to protect yourself. Wear a hat. Cover your body with lightweight clothing, and protect any exposed skin with a good quality sunscreen. The sunscreen that you use should have an SPF (sun protection factor) of no less than fifteen. Many experts suggest using SPF 30 or higher to give your skin the best protection. Although sunscreen is a must for outdoor exposure, never assume that it can protect you one hundred percent. You need to be smart in all of the decisions you make.

### Don't Cloud the Issue

Never assume that the sun's rays have disappeared on those dull, cloudy days. Just because you can't see the sun, it is still shining behind the clouds, and you can bet those ultraviolet rays are still coming through. In fact, at least sixty percent or more of the sun's UV rays will get through a heavy cloud cover. Assuming that being immersed in the water will protect you is another mistake. Reflection of the sun's rays off the surface of the water can actually cause them to have a stronger effect. Unless you are submerged at least a foot under the water, the sun's harmful rays are still able to reach you.

### Pull the Plug on Tanning Beds

Tanning salons are not your friends and must be avoided at all costs. Using tanning beds, tanning booths or tanning lamps will give you a healthy looking glow, but experts believe that they will also give you skin cancer. Studies have proven that a fifteen to thirty minute tanning session barrages your skin with the equivalent of a full day's exposure to the sun. Your body deserves better than that. Some people in search of the sun kissed look will also try tinted lotions, creams or supplements. These don't increase your risk of skin cancer, but researchers have cited other potential dangers associated with the use of these products. In the end, a tan just isn't worth the added health risks.

Women and men alike should seek ways to reduce the risk of skin cancer. While women tend to spend more time working on their tans, men are more likely to play outdoor sports. Both genders work in the garden, mow the lawn and keep up on exterior home maintenance. All of these outdoor activities require protection from the sun.

Children are at great risk of developing skin cancer, and parents are responsible for their safety. Be sure that every inch of your child's delicate skin is covered before he or she goes outside to play. Kids who suffer from one or more nasty sunburns will face a higher risk of skin cancer when they reach their adult years.

Self-examination is an important step to the early detection of skin cancer. While not a preventative measure, performing a thorough self-examination of your entire body every couple of months will enable you to spot troublesome areas, like new moles. If you see an area that may indicate signs of skin cancer, call your doctor right away.

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer is a harrowing experience for anyone to go through. It is much simpler to take the necessary steps to prevent skin cancer early in life.