

Summer is coming and with it those glorious long days of outdoor fun, swimming, picnicking, playing ball, or just relaxing. Being in the sun can be fun! But spending too much time in the sun can be bad for you --- even deadly. This year, more than one million Americans will develop one of three forms of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and malignant melanoma. Over 90 percent of these cancers will show up on sun-exposed skin, more than likely on the face, neck, ears, forearms, and hands. The main cause of skin cancer is overexposure to the sun.



SUN SMARTS

Being in the sun can still be fun, but it's important to be smart about it.

Parents should remember to protect their children from the sun's rays by following the same sun safety tips as adults. Just one bad blistering sunburn during childhood can double the risk of skin cancer later in life.

- Avoid the sun from 10 AM to 4 PM. Stay in the shade and avoid the midday sun. If your shadow is shorter than you are, you're more likely to sunburn.
- Cover up with clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat.
- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen — sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher. Reapply sunscreen often. Sunscreen is one of the most important ways to protect children from sun damage later in life.
- Keep babies 6 months or younger out of the sun whenever possible. Special sunscreens are available for babies and children who are under 6 years of age.
- Learn the signs of skin cancer:
 - A skin growth that increases in size;
 - A mole, birthmark or beauty mark that changes color, increases in size or thickness, changes in texture or is irregular in outline;
 - A spot or growth that continues to itch, hurt, crust, scab, erode or bleed; and
 - An open sore or wound on the skin that does not heal or persists for more than four weeks, or one that heals and then reopens.

If you notice any of these signs, consult your doctor immediately.



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