



Just the Facts...

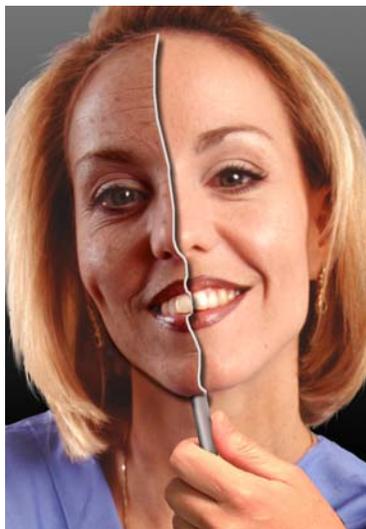
Summer is Here: Protect Yourself from Harmful UV Rays

When you visit a typical full-service salon this time of year, you are likely to see a number of people – particularly young women – lined up to use a tanning bed. Despite the well-known dangers associated with exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays, many people continue to seek the tanned look. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, more than a million people visit tanning salons on an average day.

Some are convinced that tans make us look better – more attractive, even healthier. We are surrounded by a multitude of messages and images that support this belief. For example, popular magazines abound with photographs and advertisements that feature well-tanned models.

Knowing the effects of UV rays may help you make wise choices to protect yourself from dangerous consequences. Too much UV exposure can cause sunburn, and a few severe sunburns raise the risk of skin cancer. However, a suntan is also a sign of skin damage. Years of exposure, even without being burned, can lead to skin cancer and other problems.

The majority of skin cancers are associated with unprotected UV exposure. Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. and is being diagnosed more frequently in a younger population.



Other consequences of excessive UV exposure include:

- Premature aging of the skin (wrinkles, sagging cheeks).
- Dark skin patches called lentigos (often called “liver spots” or “age spots”).
- Eye damage.
- A weakened immune system.

So what can you do to minimize UV exposure and the potential risk to you or your family’s health?

1. Avoid excessive exposure to the sun, especially during midday hours (10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.), when UV rays are most intense.
2. Avoid tanning booths, unless medically recommended. Experts advise not to use tanning booths due to the risk of excessive UV radiation exposure.
3. Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater.
 - Apply sunscreen liberally about 20 to 30 minutes prior to going out in the sun and then every 2 hours after that. You should re-apply more often if you spend time in the water or sweat excessively.
 - According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, a minimal amount of sunscreen may be used for babies less than 6 months of age if adequate clothing and shelter are unavailable. Only small amounts should be applied to exposed areas of the body such as the face and hands. Still, the best protection is to shelter infants from the sun or dress them in lightweight clothing that covers most of their skin. For more information, talk to your baby’s healthcare provider.
 - The recommendations for babies older than 6 months of age are to use a sunscreen that is made for children. Remember to apply and re-apply the sunscreen as directed. Teach children protection precautions so they become a habit for them.

4. Wear appropriate clothing and hats.
 - Dark-colored, tightly woven clothing can help protect the skin from UV radiation.
 - Hats with large brims (3 or more inches), especially those with material to cover the back of the head and neck, offer good protection.
5. Be aware of the effects of certain medications.
 - Some prescribed and over-the-counter medications may cause an intense reaction to UV radiation, causing a person to burn much more quickly.
 - Check with your pharmacist or healthcare provider if you have questions about the medications you are taking.
6. Don't forget your eyes.
 - Wear sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation.
 - Check labels because darker-shaded sunglasses do not necessarily offer more protection.
7. Check your skin. Contact your healthcare provider if you have a mole or blemish that shows any of these "ABCD" warning signs:
 - **Asymmetry** – one half is shaped unlike the other half
 - **Border irregular** – scalloped, notched, or uneven edges
 - **Color varied** from one area to another; may be shades of tan, brown, or black, or sometimes white, red, or blue
 - **Diameter** larger than 6 mm, which is about the diameter of a pencil eraser

This summer, enjoy your time spent outdoors and remember to protect yourself and your loved ones from excessive UV exposure.

For more information on sun protection, visit the following websites:

- [U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine \(USACHPPM\)](#)
- [Hooah4Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)
- [American Academy of Dermatology](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)