

Tips to Protect Yourself From the Sun

JUNE 17, 2009

DENVER — Many people love the warm sun. The sun's rays make us feel good, and in the short term, make us look good. But, exposure to sun is the number one cause of skin cancer and causes most of the wrinkles and age spots on our faces.

In fact, sun exposure causes most of the skin changes that we think of as a normal part of aging. Over time, the sun's ultraviolet (UV) light damages the fibers in the skin called elastin. When these fibers breakdown, the skin begins to sag, stretch, and lose its ability to go back into place after stretching. So while sun damage to the skin may not be apparent when you're young, it will definitely show later in life.

Here are some tips to help you protect yourself from the sun.

Reapply. Perspiration, exercise, swimming and towel-drying removes sunscreen from the skin so you should reapply after taking part in any of these activities, even if the product is waterproof.

Overcast weather doesn't mean your not at risk. Cloudy weather still requires sunscreen in summer because 80 per cent of ultra-violet radiation is still present on cloudy days.

Everyday use protects in the long term. Using sunscreen every day on your face and back of the hands will limit the chances of developing dry leathery skin, wrinkles, and other signs of premature aging and skin cancer.

Put enough on. The recommended application for adequate protection is 35 to 40ml per person per session (a handful). You may think you're applying SPF15, say, but if you don't use the correct amount then it may only be equivalent to SPF8.

Apply correctly. Sunscreen should be applied to clean, dry skin 30 minutes before exposure to the sun which allows it time to absorb properly.

No need to waste money. Budget brands are just as effective as the more expensive brands.

There is no "safe" ultraviolet (UV) light. There is no such thing as a safe tan.

Avoid tanning beds. Ultraviolet light from the sun and tanning beds can cause skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look like you've been in the sun, consider using a sunless self-tanning product, but continue to use sunscreen with it. Avoid sunbathing, wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and protective clothing.

Avoid Mid-Day. The sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Use extra caution near water, snow and sand as they reflect the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase your chance of sunburn. Get vitamin D safely through a healthy diet that may include vitamin supplements. Don't seek the sun

Check your birthday suit on your birthday. If you notice anything changing, growing or bleeding on your skin, see a dermatologist. Skin cancer is very treatable when caught early.

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