

OFP Patient Education Handout

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SUNSCREEN



More than 2 million people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year. Protecting yourself from the sun's rays can help prevent skin cancer. Water resistant sunscreens with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) rating of 30 or greater help to protect the skin from sunburn, early skin aging, and skin cancer. A SPF rating indicates how long a sunscreen will remain effective on the skin. For example, if you normally develop sunburn in 10 minutes without wearing a sunscreen, a sunscreen with a SPF rating of 30 will protect you for 300 minutes - 10 minutes times the SPF of 30. Water resistant sunscreens should maintain the SPF level after 40 minutes of being in water. Everyone of any skin tone should use a sunscreen when outdoors. People who have had skin cancer or have a very fair skin should use a SPF of greater than 30 for extra protection when outside in the sun.

Sunscreen Basics:

- Apply a sunscreen to dry skin 15 minutes before going outdoors.
- Reapply a sunscreen every two hours or after swimming or sweating heavily to all exposed skin.
- Wear sun protective clothing and avoid sun exposure from 10 AM to 2 PM year around.
- Exercise extra caution near sand, snow, or water as they reflect the damaging rays of the sun which can increase the chance of sunburn. Even on cloudy days, up to 80% of the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays can enter the skin.
- Avoid tanning beds. UV light from tanning beds also can cause skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look tan, consider using a self-tanning product along with a sunscreen.
- Skin cancer also can form on the lips. To protect your lips, apply a lip balm that contains sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher.
- Sunscreen options include: Lotions and creams which are best for dry skin and the face. Gels are good for hairy areas such as the scalp and male chest. Sticks are good to use around the eyes. Sprays are preferred by parents since they are easy to apply to children. There are also sunscreens made for sensitive skin and kids.
- Avoid sun exposure and do not use sunscreens on infants younger than 6 months of age.
- Use sunglasses, select hats with front and back flaps, and shady areas to provide protection from the sun's rays as well.

Medical Care and Treatment Options:

If you develop sunburn or notice anything changing, growing, or bleeding on the skin call your family doctor. Skin cancer is treatable when caught early. Likewise, if you have any questions about which sunscreen would be best for you or your children please contact your Osteopathic Family Doctor.

Source(s): American Academy of Dermatology, Sunscreen.gov, Up-To-Date, and Web MD.

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