



Guide to a Skin-Safe Summer

By Southeast Health Group

Schooooooool's OUT for the summer!

This is the season of bare feet, sprinklers, watermelon and popsicles. Get ready to spend more time outside enjoying the beautiful summer weather. It's also the time of year when the sun sits high on the horizon and its ultra-violet (UV) rays are more concentrated as they land on earth. Here are a few tips to make sure your family has a skin-safe summer!

Keep your sunglasses handy. Your eyes are sensitive to UV rays, which can cause damage over time and increase the risk of cataracts. Keep your sunglasses on a lanyard around your neck so they don't get misplaced. Stash an extra pair in your purse or car in case you forget them at home.

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Wear sunscreen. Doctors have determined there is no such thing as a “healthy tan,” not even from a tanning bed. Throw out the old tanning oil and purchase a good sun block. Look for an SPF 15 or 30 and the words “broad spectrum” on the label. This is the surest way to reduce your risk of skin damage and skin cancer. Exposure to

damaging UV rays is cumulative over your lifetime, so preventing skin damage now will pay off in the future with fewer wrinkles, spots and discolorations.

Reapply sunscreen hourly if you're sweating or swimming. Toweling off will easily remove sun block and prevent it from being effective. Sing a catchy tune or offer treats to keep kids engaged while reapplying.

Find some shade. If you are planning to be outside for more than 15 minutes, find a shady spot under a tree or a shelter. Keep a wide-brimmed hat in the car for trips to the playground or pool. Use an umbrella when you go for walks to shield your head and shoulders and keep yourself cooler. Pack a pop-up shade canopy for parades and ball games.

Avoid being in the sun from 10 AM to 2 PM. If possible, plan your exercise or gardening in the early morning or evening, when the sun is less intense. Plan indoor activities for the kids during the peak sun window, such as chores, naps or craft projects. Use the cooler evening hours for outdoor family activities.

Cover up. People who work outside in the sun are advised to cover their arms and legs with long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Scientists have developed new kinds of fabric that allow the skin to breathe while blocking UV rays



from penetrating. Visit a sporting goods stores to check out the new cooling technology.

Get a professional opinion. Check your face, back of hands, arms, chest, and upper back regularly for changes in the look and quality of your skin. If you notice skin damage, such as spots, blemishes, irregularly shaped moles, or sores that won't heal, see a dermatologist for an opinion. They can tell a lot from a quick visual examination, and will be able to freeze off worrisome spots on the first visit. It is comforting to know that 95% of all skin cancer is easily treated if diagnosed early.

All of us at Southeast Health Group wish you and your family an active, skin-safe summer! Should you have health concerns of any kind, please call us at 1-800-511-5446, or find us on the web at www.southeasthealthgroup.org.