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Skin Cancer: A Concern for All Ages

You're never too young or too old to be harmed by the sun. This may sound strange to you because without the sun's warming rays, life on earth could not exist. But the sun is both friend and foe. It is responsible for more than 90 percent of all skin cancers, which are now occurring at the epidemic rate of more than a million new cases a year in the United States. The sun can also age your skin before its time.

Skin cancer experts have long believed that sunburns suffered during youth are more likely to lead to melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, than sunburns in adulthood. New research, however, suggests that sunburns at any age may be equally dangerous. This is true for both males and females.

Everyone Over 50 Need Screening - Especially Men

Older adults have the greatest risk of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Unfortunately, this fact hasn't made a big impression on men.

A recent study reviewing the American Academy of Dermatology's National Skin Cancer Screening Program shows that middle-aged and older men have the poorest track record for performing monthly skin self-examinations or regularly visiting a dermatologist. Thus, they are the least likely individuals to detect melanoma in its early stages, when it is almost always curable through surgical removal alone.

"This increases their chances of having an undetected melanoma spread, thereby requiring more radical treatment and lowering their odds of survival," says study co-author Barbara Gilchrest, MD, professor and chair of the Department of Dermatology at Boston University. "That's one reason why men over age 50 have a disproportionately high mortality rate from melanoma."

Over 44 percent of the screened individuals diagnosed with melanoma were men over age 50, though this group comprised only 25 percent of those screened. Fortunately, the vast majority of their melanomas were not yet invasive or barely invasive. Without screening, many of these melanomas might have remained

undetected until dangerously advanced. The study suggests that widespread screenings could vastly improve the cure rate.

Protect Yourself and Your Family All Year Round

- **Seek the shade**, especially between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M.
- **Avoid getting sunburned.**
- **Use a broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen** with an SPF of 15 or higher every day. For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- **Apply 1 ounce** (2 tablespoons) of sunscreen to your entire body 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours or after swimming.
- **Cover up** with clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses.
- **Examine your skin** head-to-toe every month.
- **See a dermatologist every year** for a professional skin exam.
- **Avoid tanning and UV tanning salons.**

Did You Know...?

- Year-round sun protection is important
- The sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation can penetrate many types of clothes?
- It can also go through automobile and residential windows?
- It can damage your eyes, contributing to cataracts, macular degeneration, and eyelid cancers?
- When you're on snow or ice, your face and eyes are at almost twice the risk of UV damage because of reflected glare?

The Skin Cancer Foundation expanded its **Seal of Recommendation** program. The Foundation has granted the **Seal** to products as follows:

Sunscreens:

Daily Use Seal of Recommendation

- UVB protection: A sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Validation of the SPF number by testing on 10 human subjects.

- UVA Protection: A critical wavelength of 370. Learn more about this test.
- Acceptable results for phototoxic reactions and contact irritancy testing on 20 human subjects.
- Testing data for any claims that a sunscreen is water- or sweat-resistant.

Active Seal of Recommendation

- UVB protection: A sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Validation of the SPF number by testing on 10 human subjects.
- UVA Protection: A critical wavelength of 370. Learn more about this test.
- Acceptable results for both phototoxic reactions and contact irritancy testing on 20 human subjects.
- Proof of water resistance.

International Seal of Recommendation

- A sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher
- Validation of SPF number testing on 10 subjects
- Substantiation for any claims that a sunscreen is water- or sweat-resistant
- Acceptable results for both phototoxic reactions and contact irritancy testing on 20 subjects

Clothing, Sunshades, Umbrellas, Fabric and Fabric Treatment

Traditional Seal of Recommendation

- An ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 30 or higher
- Acceptable test results according to the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists method or AS/NZS Standard
- For hats, in addition to the fabric requirements specified above, a minimum brim width of 3 inches

Traditional Seal of Recommendation

- 99% or greater blockage of UVA and UVB radiation

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Many products in the United States and abroad currently have qualified for the seal. To search for products with the Seal or to download a pdf of Brands with the Seal of Recommendation, visit the [Skin Cancer Foundation website](https://www.skincancer.org). The Foundation website is also a great resource for additional articles and information on skin cancer and related topics.

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