

5 Myths About Protecting Yourself from Skin Cancer

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Sample of Content:

Sara spends much of her summer near the beach. She lives in a mild climate and is very athletic. She loves to swim, bike and play games outdoors. Sara knows the dangers of the sun and so she opts for tanning salons to get her 'golden glow' while being sure to apply sunscreen every day before heading out.

Content:

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Joseph lives in a cooler, northern climate. The summers can be very humid, but most of the year is mild or even below freezing during the harshest winter months. The beach has never been much of a draw for him and he spends most of his time doing indoor activities or at his job. Joseph doesn't worry about sunscreen and only had one sunburn that he can remember and that was when he was a child.

Which of these examples do you most associate yourself with? Did you know that Sara and Joseph are both at risk of developing skin cancer? We have all heard the warnings about the dangers of sun exposure. We know all about the importance of wearing sunscreen and hats. But are YOU protected from skin cancer? Consider these myths and facts:

MYTH ONE: Tanning Beds are Safer than the Sun

20 minutes of exposure in a tanning bed is roughly equivalent to four hours in the sun. Although sun beds use UVA rather than UVB rays, 'The Skin Cancer Answer' states that "UV-A penetrates more deeply into the skin than UV-B, can cause skin cancer, and may suppress the immune system."

MYTH TWO: Wearing Sunscreen at the Beach is Protection

85 percent of UV rays can even make it through on cloudy days. That means you are equally at risk in the car, walking the dog or letting your children out to play at any time of year - even when you're not at the beach. Of course, you are usually less attired at the beach and so covering up is recommended even when wearing sunscreen. Sunscreen also wears off with sweat and water and should always be applied every two hours or after getting wet.

MYTH THREE: Taking Care Of Your Skin Now Will Protect You

Sadly, skin cancer can take 20 or more years to develop. The Skin Cancer Foundation states that most people receive about 80 percent of their lifetime sun exposure before the age of 18. Just one blistering sunburn in childhood is estimated to double the risk of melanoma later in life. Taking better care now will reduce the risk, but not eliminate the damage already done.

MYTH FOUR: Having a Tan Means You're More Protected

Dark skinned individuals are less likely to develop cancer, but tanned skin is actually damaged skin. Repeated tanning injures the skin and increases the risk of skin cancer.

MYTH FIVE: You Can't get Burned on Overcast Days

Just because the sun is hidden by some cloud does not mean that you don't need protection from the harmful effects of the sun's rays.

So how do you plan to protect your family this year? Some suggestions are to limit exposure to the sun - especially for infants. Examine your skin for early signs of damage. Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher and apply it at least 30 minutes before exposure and every two hours after that. Teach your children good safety habits and be sure you and they are covered up when outdoors. Have fun and be safe.

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