

## Think the Sun Gives You a Healthy Glow? Skin Cancer Risks Dramatically Increase with Every Burn

It's summer and that means fun in the sun! But, unprotected exposure is dangerous and now, skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the U.S. Since 1973, new cases of melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, have increased by 150 percent! This is why it's important for you to take precautions to keep you and your family safe from this potentially deadly disease.

### **Skin cancer overview**

There are three types of skin cancer that are prevalent in the U.S. Basal cell carcinoma accounts for 75 percent of all skin cancers and rarely spreads to other organs. Squamous cell carcinoma accounts for another 20 percent of skin cancer and can spread to the lymph nodes and internal organs, possibly causing death. Both basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas, however, are highly curable.

Melanoma skin cancer also is highly curable if detected early and before it spreads. It usually first appears on men's trunks and women's lower legs, but it also can show up on the head, neck and elsewhere.



It is the ultraviolet (UV) light in sunlight that can harm skin and cause cancer. As a matter of fact, skin damage can occur after just 15 minutes of exposure to the sun. Studies also have shown that getting sunburned often as a child plays a role in the development of skin cancer later in life. Therefore, it's important that parents take steps to prevent kids from getting sunburned. Sunlamps and tanning beds also have been linked to melanoma. Therefore, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people avoid using sunlamps and tanning beds.

To help prevent skin cancer, it is important for you to protect yourself and your family members, even during cloudy days, since UV rays can still reach vulnerable skin. The hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. (daylight savings time) are the most dangerous for UV exposure in the continental U.S., especially during the spring and summer months.

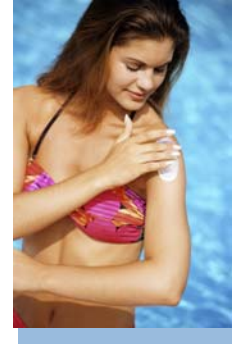
### **Recommendations**

The CDC recommends the following to protect skin from UV rays:

- Apply sunscreen that has a sun protective factor (SPF) of at least 15 and offers both UV-A and UV-B protection.
- Wear clothing that covers arms and legs to protect skin.
- Wear a hat with a brim to protect face, ears, neck and head.
- Wear sunglasses that protect from both UV-A and UV-B exposure.
- Go under shade, especially during peak sunlight hours

## Sunscreen

Wear sunscreen even on cloudy or cool days and apply it thickly even on hard-to-reach areas, such as your back. Make sure you apply sunscreen on children. Only allow older kids to put the sunscreen on themselves and watch to make sure they do so adequately. Remember that sunscreen wears off after a while. Reapply after two hours or after swimming or sweating. You also should check the expiration date of your sunscreen.



## Protective clothing

Loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants made of tightly woven fabric can protect against UV rays. Darker colors might protect more than lighter colors as well. A hat with a brim all the way around it, made of a heavier material, will protect your face, neck, head and ears from UV exposure. If you or your child is wearing a baseball cap, remember to put sunscreen on ears and neck.

## Sunglasses and Shade

Sunglasses protect your eyes from UV rays and reduce the risk of cataracts. They also protect the skin around your eyes. Most sunglasses sold in the U.S. offer both UV-A and UV-B protection, which is what is recommended. The CDC recommends wraparound glasses to prevent sunlight from getting to your face from the sides. You also can find protection from the sun in shade created by a tree, umbrella or other shelter. But your best protection is to wear sunscreen and/or clothing even when you're in the shade.

## Risk factors for skin cancer

Anyone, no matter what ethnicity or geographical location, can get skin cancer. However, white people are at an increased risk. Also, people with a large number of moles are at more risk of developing melanoma skin cancer. Most moles are harmless, but some can undergo abnormal changes and become cancerous. A changing mole is often an indicator of melanoma skin cancer.

A person is also at more risk for developing melanoma if there is a family history of the disease. If first-degree relatives have had melanoma, you may be as much as eight times more likely to develop it yourself.

Skin cancer is frighteningly common these days, but there is good news: there are relatively easy ways to protect yourself and your loved ones. This summer, vow to keep you and your family covered; lotion up, cover up and find a shady spot. And **look to Logan, [www.MyLoganHealth.org](http://www.MyLoganHealth.org)**, to give you the information you need to stay healthy.



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