

May is Melanoma Awareness Month: Protect Your Skin

Springtime and warmer weather are times to enjoy the outdoors. Whether you are going for a walk, working in the yard, or enjoying a picnic in your back yard or at the park they can be fun.

We need to be outside as we need it for Vitamin D. But we also need to be careful when we are out in the sun or outside on a cloudy day, we need to protect our skin.

Too much sun can cause skin damage, including dark patches, wrinkles, and premature aging. Too much sun exposure also is responsibly for skin cancer.

May is Melanoma Awareness Month and it coincides with the launce of spring and summer activities for good reason. Melanoma is the most aggressive form of skin cancer.

In 2020, 100,300 people were estimated to be diagnosed with melanoma and 6,850 people were estimated to die from melanoma, according to the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program

More than 5 million people are diagnosed each year with nonmelanoma cancer such as basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. These forms of cancer rarely spread to other parts of the body but require prompt treatment.

If you have a fair complexion and are male, you are more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma. If you are a frequent user of tanning beds, you are also more likely to get skin cancer.

Sunless tanning is also not a good option. The tanning beds are considered a carcinogen, especially linked to melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma and cancer of the eyes. However, sunless tanning lotions are considered safe.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that we take steps to protect our skin.

- Seek shade, Limit sun exposure during midday hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Wear clothing that protects your arms and legs.
- Wear a hat with a broad brim. Baseball caps don't protect enough around the ears and neck.
- Wear sunglasses with UVA or UVB ray protection.
- Wear sunscreens. SPR of 30 or high is recommended.
- Avoid indoor tanning.

Check your skin regularly for spots or lesions. Look for the ABCDEs of melanoma:

- Asymmetry (the two halves of the spot are not the same)
- Bord is irregular (the spot may have ragged or notched edges)
- Color variation (brown, black, pink, white or blue)
- A diameter larger than a pencil eraser
- Note if the spot or mole is "evolving" (changing size, shape or color)

Source: Centers for Disease Control