

SUN SAFETY

Save Your Skin!

Sun safety is never out of season. Summer's arrival means it's time for picnics, trips to the pool and beach—and a spike in the number of sunburns. But winter skiers and fall hikers should be as wary of the sun's rays as swimmers. People who work outdoors need to take precautions, too.

The need for sun safety has become clearer over the past 30 years. Studies show that exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer. Harmful rays from the sun—and from sunlamps and tanning beds—may also cause eye problems, weaken your immune system, and give you skin spots, wrinkles, or “leathery” skin.

Sun damage to the body is caused by invisible ultraviolet (UV) radiation. People recognize sunburn as a type of skin damage caused by the sun. Tanning is also a sign of the skin reacting to potentially damaging UV radiation by producing additional pigmentation that provides it with some—but often not enough—protection against sunburn.

To remind everyone to protect their skin and health while enjoying the outdoors, the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention (NCSCP) has designated May 25, 2012 as “Don't



Fry Day.” The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Environmental Protection Agency, advisory members of the council, are helping spread the word on sun safety.

Whatever our skin color, we’re all potentially susceptible to sunburn and other harmful effects of exposure to UV radiation. Although we all need to take precautions to protect our skin, people who need to be especially careful in the sun are those who have

- pale skin
- blond, red, or light brown hair
- been treated for skin cancer
- a family member who’s had skin cancer

If you take medicines, ask your health care professional about sun-care precautions; some medications may increase sun sensitivity.

Reduce Time in the Sun

It’s important to limit sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun’s rays are strongest. Even on an overcast day, up to 80 percent of the sun’s UV rays can get through the clouds. Stay in the shade as much as possible throughout the day.

Dress with Care

Wear clothes that protect your body. If you plan on being outside on a sunny day, cover as much of your body as possible. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves, and pants. Sun-protective clothing is now available. However, FDA only regulates such products if the manufacturer intends to make a medical claim. Consider using an umbrella for shade.

Be Serious about Sunscreen

Check product labels to make sure you get

- a “sun protection factor” (SPF) of 15 or more. SPF represents the degree to which a sunscreen can protect the skin from sunburn.
- “broad spectrum” protection—sunscreen that protects against all types of skin damage caused by sunlight
- water resistance—sunscreen that

Slip! Slop! Slap! Wrap!

The National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention has designated the Friday before Memorial Day as “Don’t Fry Day.” The goal? To make sure people stay safe in the sun and protect their skin while enjoying the outdoors—on “Don’t Fry Day” and every day.

Here’s why. Skin cancer is on the rise in the United States; the American Cancer Society estimates that one American dies every hour from skin cancer. In 2012 alone, the American Cancer Society estimates there will be more than 76,250 new cases of malignant melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer.

stays on your skin longer, even if it gets wet. Reapply water-resistant sunscreens as instructed on the label

Tips for Applying Sunscreen

- Apply the recommended amount evenly to all uncovered skin, especially your lips, nose, ears, neck, hands, and feet.
- Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going out in the sun.
- If you don’t have much hair, apply sunscreen to the top of your head, or wear a hat.
- Reapply at least every two hours.
- Give babies and children extra care in the sun. Ask a health care professional before applying sunscreen to children under 6 months old.
- Apply sunscreen to children older than 6 months every time they go out.

Protect the Eyes

Sunlight reflecting off snow, sand, or water further increases exposure to UV radiation and increases your risk of developing eye problems.

Tips for eye-related sun safety include:

- When buying sunglasses, look for a label that specifically offers 99 to 100 percent UV protection.



“Don’t Fry Day” offers simple steps that you and your family can take to prevent sun-related skin cancer, such as:

- Slip on a shirt
- Slop on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher
- Slap on a wide-brimmed hat.
- Wrap on sunglasses.

For more information on resources available for “Don’t Fry Day” and skin safety, visit www.skincancerprevention.org.

- Eyewear should be labeled “sunglasses.” Otherwise, you can’t be sure they will offer enough protection.
- Pricier sunglasses don’t ensure greater UV protection.
- Ask an eye care professional to test your sunglasses if you don’t know their level of UV protection.
- People who wear contact lenses that offer UV protection should still wear sunglasses.
- Wraparound sunglasses offer the most protection.
- Children should wear real sun glasses (not toy sunglasses!) that indicate the UV protection level.



Find this and other Consumer Updates at www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates

Sign up for free e-mail subscriptions at www.fda.gov/consumer/consumerenews.html