

JULY IS NATIONAL UV SAFETY MONTH

July is “National UV Safety Month.” There are 6 different skin colors according to the Fitzpatrick scale. Each skin type is affected differently by the sun. Type I (ivory) always freckles, always burns/peels, and never tans. Type II (fair or pale) usually freckles, often burns/peels, and rarely tans. Type III (fair with golden undertones) might freckle, burns on occasion, and sometimes tans. Type IV (olive or light brown) doesn’t really freckle, rarely burns, and often tans. Type V (dark brown) rarely freckles, almost never burns, and always tans. Type VI (darkly pigmented dark brown to darkest brown) never freckles, never burns, and always tans.

So, know your skin type!

This is important because one bad sunburn can give you skin cancer. Over a lifetime, the risk of developing the most serious kind of skin cancer (melanoma) climbs with just one sunburn and the overall lifetime risk of developing melanoma climbs 80% with 5 blistering burns in childhood.

So, it is really important to prevent your children and yourself from getting burned.

However, “what’s done is done.” UV injury accumulates over time. The other 2 kinds of skin cancer (basal cell and squamous cell) increase in likelihood depending on the total accumulated UV light during your lifetime. It’s like pouring water into a pitcher; even as an adult, stop pouring UV radiation into the pitcher.

It’s never too late to start protecting yourself and your loved ones. So, cover your skin with protective clothing like long-sleeved shirts and long pants, wearing a wide-brimmed hat, and wearing wraparound sunglasses. You should also avoid the hottest time of the day and stick to the shade as much as possible. And, of course, WEAR SUNSCREEN. Use SPF 30 or higher. Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before heading outdoors, and reapply every 2 hours. And, don’t forget your lips and scalp!

Finally, if you have something on your skin and you are not certain what it is, see your doctor. At the Ashley Clinic, Dr. Law and Dr. VanHouden know how to treat all kinds of skin cancer and can help you distinguish a noncancerous skin lesion from something more dangerous.

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