# Summer Skin Care Advice

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As we prepare for the summer months, consider the largest organ of our body — our skin. One of the most important ways to take care of your skin is to protect it from the sun, since a lifetime of sun exposure can cause wrinkles, age spots and other skin problems as well as increase the risk of skin cancer. To make your summer more sun safe, here are some skin care tips for you and your family.

### **Keeping Your Skin Sun Safe**

Preventing the sun's rays from reaching your skin is the best approach for protection. Choose sunscreens that provide broad-spectrum protection [that block both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays] with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 15. When outdoors, reapply sunscreen every two hours or more often if you're swimming or perspiring. Seek shade and avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest. Wear protective clothing, including tightly woven long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and wide-brimmed hats. Also consider laundry additives that give clothing an additional layer of ultraviolet protection for a certain number of washings, or special SPF-rated sun-protective clothing. Remember . . . it is important to protect against the sun even on cloudy days.

Lips, too, are susceptible to skin cancer. Be sure to wear a broadspectrum, sun-protective lip balm with an SPF of at least 15 to keep lips sun safe and supple. Avoid petroleum-based lipsticks or shiny glosses since they reflect more sun and increase exposure to harmful

### **Healthy Skin Means Daily Care**

Daily cleansing and shaving can take a toll on your skin. Keep it gentle by limiting bath time and using warm water, mild soaps and moisturizers. After washing or bathing, gently pat or blot your skin dry with a towel so that some moisture remains on your skin and apply moisturizer immediately. For daily use, consider a moisturizer that contains SPF.

Shave carefully. To protect and lubricate your skin, apply shaving cream, lotion or gel before shaving. Shave in the direction the hair grows, not against it.

Smoking makes your skin look older; contributes to wrinkles, and narrows the tiny blood vessels in the outermost layers of skin, which decreases blood flow. Smoking also damages collagen and elastin: the fibers that give your skin its strength and elasticity. Additionally, the repetitive facial expressions you make when smoking — such as pursing your lips when inhaling and squinting your eyes to keep out smoke — can contribute to wrinkles. The best way to protect your skin is to quit. Ask your doctor for tips or treatments to help you stop smoking or call the Excela Health Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist at 724-537-1615 for help with quitting.

# **Protecting Children's Skin from Sun Damage**

Children's skin is thin, delicate and can easily sunburn. One bad sunburn in childhood doubles the risk of malignant melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, later in life. Much like adults, to prevent sunburn in your child, dress them in a wide-brimmed hat and lightweight clothes made of tightly woven fabric. Apply waterproof sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher 15 to 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours, especially after water play.

If your child does get a sunburn, first cool the skin by gently applying a cold, wet washcloth for 10 to 15 minutes, three or four times a day until the redness goes away. Then soothe the skin with aloe vera gel or a mild hypoallergenic moisturizer. Consult a physician immediately for sunburn-related blistering, fever, vomiting, or for sunburn over a large area of skin.

# Rashes, Bites and Bumps, Oh My!

High temperatures and humidity can cause heat rash, especially if you're overdressed or prone to sweating. Heat rash is a common summer skin care problem in children, appearing as tiny red bumps on the face, neck, armpits, upper chest and back. Caused by clogged sweat gland pores that trap perspiration, the bumps can be itchy and very uncomfortable. Try to keep cool and stay dry. Avoid clothes that rub or irritate the skin. In hot weather, cut down on the time a very young child spends in a sling or carrier, and dress him in loose-fitting, lightweight clothes. To cool a heat rash, use a lukewarm bath with a mild

soap. Avoid powders and lotions since they can block pores further. A mild heat rash should go away on its own, but if it is accompanied by swelling, oozing, pustules, dizziness, nausea, or difficulty breathing, seek medical attention immediately, since those symptoms may be signs of an infection or a more serious heat-related illness.

Insect bites can be a nuisance so wash the area first with soap and water, then apply a cold, wet washcloth to reduce any swelling or pain. With itchy bites, you can also use calamine lotion. If you notice signs of an allergic reaction (such as severe pain or swelling, difficulty breathing, hives, or itching all over the body), consult a physician immediately.

For babies younger than two months, the best defense is a chemical-free one: Dress newborns in lightweight long-sleeve tops, long pants, a hat, and socks to ward off biting bugs. You can also cover your baby's stroller with insect netting and head indoors at dusk when the mosquitoes come out.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends avoiding products that contain more than 30 percent DEET or 10 percent picaridin. Whatever insect repellent you use, don't put it on your child more than once a day and avoid getting it near the eyes, mouth, or hands. Once back home, remember to wash the repellent off with soap and water.

Summer can be fun for all and, there are some positive aspects to limited sun exposure. The sun is our primary source of vitamin D, which helps us absorb calcium for stronger, healthier bones. But it is important to be smart, use sunscreen, and enjoy the sun in moderation.

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