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DO YOUR
KIDS GET
TOO MUCH
SALT?
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6 TIPS FOR SUMMER SKIN SAFETY

TO REDUCE YOUR
RISK OF MELANOMA,
KEEP THE SUN'S
HARMFUL RAYS AT BAY.

AFTER SHIVERING THROUGH this year's hard winter, we all want to rush outdoors and enjoy summer's warmth. Before you do, though, remember to protect your body's largest organ: your skin.

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can damage your skin in as little as 15 minutes. "Too much exposure to the sun can put you at risk for melanoma, the most dangerous kind of skin cancer," says Rebecca D. Baxt, M.D., a dermatologist based in

Paramus. "It can also prematurely age the skin." Fortunately, a few precautions can help keep your family safe outdoors:

1 SLATHER ON THE SUNSCREEN.

"Using sunscreen is critical for protecting your skin," says Franz Smith, M.D., a surgical oncologist at Saint Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston. Sunscreen contains chemicals that, when absorbed by the skin, reflect or scatter sunlight's UV rays. Their

effectiveness is rated by a number called a sun protection factor (SPF): the higher the number, the more protective the product.

"I recommend a 'broad spectrum' product with an SPF of at least 30," says Dr. Baxt. "Broad spectrum" means a sunscreen that protects against both kinds of ultraviolet rays, UVA and UVB.

But the SPF isn't the only thing to check. "If your sunscreen is left over from last year, check the expiration date," says Dr. Baxt.



MELANOMA: THE STATS

In 2013, there were
76,690
new cases of melanoma
in the U.S.

Melanoma accounts for
only a small percentage
of skin cancer cases, but
is responsible for most
skin cancer deaths.

There were
9,480
deaths from melanoma
in 2013.

Source: National Cancer Institute

Sunscreen works best if you put it on 30 minutes before you go outside. And re-apply it every two hours—hourly if you've been swimming or perspiring heavily.

"I'm not a big fan of spray sunscreens," says Dr. Baxt. "Some people just spray them in the air and step into the spray as if it's perfume. That doesn't do the job."

2 DRESS FOR SKIN SUCCESS.
"Anyone out in the sun should dress

appropriately," Dr. Smith advises. Clothing, especially loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and long pants made from tightly woven fabric, offers protection from the sun's UV rays. These days some clothing is sold with information from the manufacturer on its "ultraviolet protection factor" (UPF), a rating of its protective power against these rays.

When you're at the beach, try to wear a T-shirt or a beach cover-up when you aren't in the water. And remember that wet T-shirts are less protective than dry.

Keep your head and face covered as well. You'll get the most protection from a hat with a brim all the way around that shades your face, your ears and the back of your neck. Choose tightly woven fabrics such as canvas in preference to straw hats. And if you favor a baseball cap, protect your ears and your neck by wearing clothing that covers those areas, by using sunscreen with at least SPF 30, and/or by staying in the shade as much as possible.

3 KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR EYES.
Sunburned eyes are at increased risk for cataracts, so wear sunglasses that protect your eyes from UV rays. They also protect the tender skin around your eyes from sun exposure. Wraparound sunglasses are a great choice, because they prevent UV rays from sneaking in from the side.

4 SHUN THE BRIGHTEST SUN.
"Avoid the peak hours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. as much as possible," Dr. Smith says. When you are out in the midday sun, you can reduce your risk of skin damage and skin cancer by seeking shade under an umbrella, a tree or other shelter.

5 CHECK IT OUT. Your skin, that is. "Inspect your skin regularly, and if anything changes or gives you concern, show your doctor or a dermatologist," says Dr. Baxt. Examine your skin during showers and in the mirror for moles that change or look abnormal, and ask a loved one to inspect hard-to-see areas such as your back and neck. And don't forget to check your scalp, especially if you're a man with thinning hair. (See "Could the Alphabet Save Your Skin?" at right.)

6 BE A ROLE MODEL. "Some parents zealously protect their children's skin but neglect their own," says Dr. Baxt. "Set a good example for your kids by taking care of your skin too." —DAVID LEVINE

COULD THE ALPHABET SAVE YOUR SKIN?

More than 3.5 million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed yearly in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society. But only a small percentage of these are melanoma, the most serious kind of skin cancer.

The incidence of melanoma is on the rise, says Franz Smith, M.D., a surgical oncologist at Saint Barnabas Medical Center. "Thankfully, though, that is largely due to better detection," he says. "So although the absolute numbers are increasing, the lesions are often caught when they are thinner, which is a good thing. Thinner melanomas are easier to treat with less extensive surgery, and the chance of their spreading is lower."

See a dermatologist if any problem area on your skin worries you. Specifically, says Paramus-based dermatologist Rebecca D. Baxt, M.D., get checked out if you notice any of these "ABCDE" signs in a wart or mole:



Asymmetry: One half is unlike the other half.



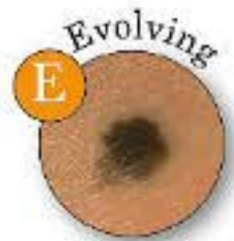
Border: There's a scalloped, poorly defined or otherwise irregular boundary.



Color: The hue varies from one area to another, has shades of tan, brown or black, or is sometimes red, white or blue.



Diameter: The diameter is greater than 6 millimeters, roughly the size of a pencil eraser.



Evolving: The skin lesion is changing in size, shape or color.

Source: American Academy of Dermatology