

STAY SAFE IN THE SUN

NOBODY WANTS TO
ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE
A BEACH BUM!

It might be hard to believe, but summer is almost here. For many of us here in New Jersey, that can only mean one thing: the beach!

Many of you already have your trips to Long Beach Island or Cape May all planned out. You're going to have a blast, but before you go, it's important to realize the damage that the sun and its powerful rays can have on your skin. Everyone wants to look young, so if you don't want to look like you're 60 when you're a few decades younger, you should follow our advice.

We spoke with Dr. Rebecca Baxt of Baxt CosMedical in Paramus to get the scoop on how to prevent sun damage this summer. Dr. Baxt has been in practice for 15 years, and when her parents started their practice 40 years ago, it was the first combined dermatology and plastic surgery practice in New Jersey. Dr. Baxt knows a thing or two about healthy skin.

The sun, Dr. Baxt explained, gives out light of all different colors of the rainbow, but it also gives out two types of light that we cannot see—ultraviolet A and ultraviolet B. These types of light can be very dangerous and they can cause a myriad of health problems. Sunscreens are designed to protect us from them.

"It's those rays that cause skin cancer," Dr. Baxt explained.

Even teenagers can start showing signs of sun damage. It only gets worse as we get older, so it's best to start protecting yourself from a young age. Infants younger than six months should not be in the sun at all. Babies have very thin skin, and it's harder for them to protect themselves.

"[Babies] can't necessarily move around if they feel like the sun is too hot on their skin," Dr. Baxt said, adding that babies must wear hats in the shade, in addition to wearing sunscreen. "They can't talk to us."

Skin damage can appear in several different forms. Freckling is one early sign that the skin has received too much exposure to ultraviolet rays. After that, individuals may notice the appearance of solar lentigines, more commonly known as age or liver spots. These are bigger than freckles and take all sorts of unattractive shapes. The skin can darken or become wrinkly. It can also get too thick or paper-thin. Broken capillaries and clogged pores are other common signs of skin damage.

"Sun damage and skin cancer can take years to show up," Dr. Baxt explained. "It will show up years later. If you start protecting yourself today, you're going to be much better off 20 years from now, and in the future than if you just ignore the sun and let it do its damage."

So what can you do? Start by getting some sunscreen—actually, make that a lot of sunscreen. Dr. Baxt recommends only SPF 30 or higher. According to her, there is no way to tan responsibly. The sun will only damage your skin. However, there are measures that you can take if you will be outside during the summer.

Always apply sunscreen 30 minutes prior to going out in the sun, and really put it on.

"You want to glop it on, and cream it up all over," explained Dr. Baxt.

When you're at the beach, you're getting sun reflected from the water and the sand, and then directly from the sun. "It's almost a triple whammy," said Dr. Baxt.

You will want to apply sunscreen every one to two hours. If you go in the water, start sweating, or if it gets windy, then put some more on. You're only helping yourself. Even if the sunscreen says it's water resistant on the tube, you need to keep reapplying.

"[People] think they can put it on once, and then go all day and not have a problem, and that just doesn't work," said Dr. Baxt.

Younger people tend to not realize the damage they're doing. It's important to be careful from a young age. Sit under an umbrella and wear sunglasses and a hat. You'll look cooler anyway! Rather than walking around all day in your bathing suit, throw on a shirt, and always reapply sunscreen.

For those who have experienced damage from the sun, there are methods to reverse some of the harm, including topical creams, chemical peels and laser surgeries. However, Dr. Baxt dissuades people from undergoing treatment if they're not going to wear sunscreen in the future.

"I don't see the point of spending a lot of time and money to reverse damage that you're just going to do again," she said.

When you pack up the car this summer, bring sunscreen, and bring lots of it. You'll look better down the road.

Dr. Baxt said it best: "Don't fry yourself like a roasted chicken on a blanket or a towel."

Baxt CosMedical is located at 351 Evelyn Street in Paramus. For more info, visit www.cosmedical.com or call (201) 265-1300.

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