



Skin Care News

MAY 2010



May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month

[Skin cancer](#) is the most frequently diagnosed of all cancers. More 1 million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the U.S. each year, and more than 90% of them are related to excessive exposure to UV radiation, primarily from the sun and [indoor tanning](#) beds.

May is **Skin Cancer Awareness Month** and in honor of this public health effort, we are providing our patients and the community with access to in-depth resources about skin cancer prevention and detection.



Skin Self Exam

The [American Academy of Dermatology](#) recommends that everyone examine their skin once per month to detect early changes to their skin.

The purpose of a skin self-exam is to identify any patches of skin that may be indicative of skin cancer. The three most common forms of skin cancer are [basal cell carcinoma](#) (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and melanoma. There are also common pre-cancerous skin lesions called [actinic keratosis](#) (AKs) that should be monitored.



We have provided an animation that provides a step-by-step summary of how to perform a [skin self exam](#).

The animation also walks through the ABCDEs of melanoma detection and covers the importance of recording your findings with a [body mole map](#).

Sunscreens

Using sunscreens is critical for protecting yourself from the sun's harmful UV radiation and reducing the risk of developing skin cancer. Here are some practical steps to selecting and using [sunscreens](#).

- **Use a "broad-spectrum" sunscreen that protects you from BOTH UVA and UVB rays.** Unless the product label says it offers UVA protection, it probably doesn't. Look for these UVA-protective ingredients: *avobenzone*, *oxybenzone*, *zinc oxide*, and/or *titanium dioxide*. Brand names include Helioplex and Mexoryl.
- **Select a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.**
- Slather it on! Most people use less than 1/2 of what is recommended. Use one ounce (2-3 tablespoons) to cover the entire body.
- Sunscreens should be applied 20 minutes before sun exposure because they need this time to interact with the skin to start working.
- Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours. Reapply immediately after swimming or sweating, even with so-called "water-resistant" brands.
- Don't rely only on sunscreens alone for protection. Be especially diligent about avoiding sun exposure during peak hours, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Wear hats with wide brims all around to protect your head and neck. Consider UV-protective clothing. Normal clothing provides an SPF protection of only 6 to 15, which falls lower if wet. Some specialized fabrics can provide SPF protection of 30 or higher. Remember to protect your lips with lip balm containing sunscreen.
- Sunscreen should be used regularly, lathered on liberally, and re-applied frequently. It should also be shared with family and friends. Find a sunscreen that fits your budget so that you use it frequently and freely.

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Be sure to follow specific instructions given to you by your physician or health care professional.