

“Do You Use Protection?” American Academy of Dermatology Study Finds Half of Americans Are Not Protecting Themselves Against Sun Damage

Dermatologists urge Americans to “practice safe sun” to reduce their risk for skin cancer

Rosemont, Ill. (May 1, 2019) – Skin cancer is one of the most preventable types of cancer, yet new data shows Americans aren’t “practicing safe sun.” In a recent survey, the American Academy of Dermatology found only half of Americans always or almost always protect themselves from the sun when they’re outside—increasing their risk for skin cancer, including melanoma.



In recognition of Skin Cancer Awareness Month in May and Melanoma Monday® on May 6, the AAD is asking Americans, “Do you use protection?” and encouraging the public to “practice safe sun” to protect themselves from skin cancer, which is the most common cancer in the United States. It’s estimated that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime, and even one blistering sunburn during childhood or adolescence can nearly double a person’s chance of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, later in life.

“Nearly 20 Americans die from melanoma every day,” said board-certified dermatologist George J. Hruza, MD, MBA, FAAD, president of the AAD. “Exposure to the sun’s harmful UV rays is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer, and there are many simple things you can do to protect yourself from the sun.”

Dr. Hruza recommends practicing safe sun with a variety of protection methods any time someone is outdoors, including:

- **Seeking shade when appropriate**, remembering that the sun’s rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- **Wearing protective clothing**, such as a lightweight, long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, when possible.
- **Applying a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher to all skin that clothing won’t cover.**

Remember to **reapply every two hours** or after swimming or sweating.

“It’s also important to remember to protect parts of your body you think might not be getting any sun,” said Dr. Hruza. “Areas like the tops of your hands, bottoms of your feet or the part in your hair may not immediately come to mind when it comes to sun protection, but they are still vulnerable to dangerous sun damage.”

Because skin cancer is highly treatable when caught early, Dr. Hruza also recommends performing regular skin self-exams and looking out for the **ABCDEs** – the warning signs of melanoma:

- **A is for Asymmetry:** One half of the spot is unlike the other half.
- **B is for Border:** The spot has an irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border.
- **C is for Color:** The spot has varying colors from one area to the next, such as shades of tan, brown or black, or areas of white, red or blue.
- **D is for Diameter:** While melanomas are usually greater than 6 millimeters — or about the size of a pencil eraser — when diagnosed, they can be smaller.
- **E is for Evolving:** The spot looks different from the rest or is changing in size, shape or color.

“If you find any new or suspicious spots on your skin, make an appointment to see a board-certified dermatologist,” said Dr. Hruza. “Spots that are changing, itching or bleeding could be a sign of skin cancer, and the earlier skin cancer is detected, the easier it is to treat.”

To encourage the public to “practice safe sun” and reduce their risk of skin cancer, the AAD released a new video, “[Do You Use Protection?](#)”, in conjunction with Skin Cancer Awareness Month. No matter your age, gender or race, the video reminds Americans about the importance of protecting their skin whenever they’re outdoors.

To learn more about skin cancer prevention and detection and to find a free skin cancer screening near you, visit [DoYouUseProtection.org](#).

The public can help raise awareness of skin cancer by using the hashtag **#PracticeSafeSun** when sharing AAD resources, photos of how they “use protection” outdoors, or encouraging friends and family to take advantage of the AAD’s free skin cancer screenings. Individuals who have been affected by skin cancer can also share their personal stories on [SpotSkinCancer.org](#) to provide support and inspiration for others fighting skin cancer and communicate the importance of skin cancer prevention and early detection.

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More Information

About the AAD

Headquartered in Rosemont, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology, founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 20,000 physicians worldwide, the AAD is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the AAD at (888) 462-DERM (3376) or aad.org. Follow the AAD on [Facebook](#) (American Academy of Dermatology), [Twitter](#) (@AADskin), [Instagram](#) (@AADskin1), or [YouTube](#) (AcademyofDermatology).

About SPOT Skin Cancer™

For more information on skin cancer prevention and detection, visit the AAD website SpotSkinCancer.org. There, you can find instructions on how to perform a skin self-exam, download a body mole map for tracking changes in your skin and find free SPOTme® skin cancer screenings in your area. SPOT Skin Cancer™ is the AAD's campaign to create a world without skin cancer through public awareness, community outreach programs and services, and advocacy that promote the prevention, detection and care of skin cancer.

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