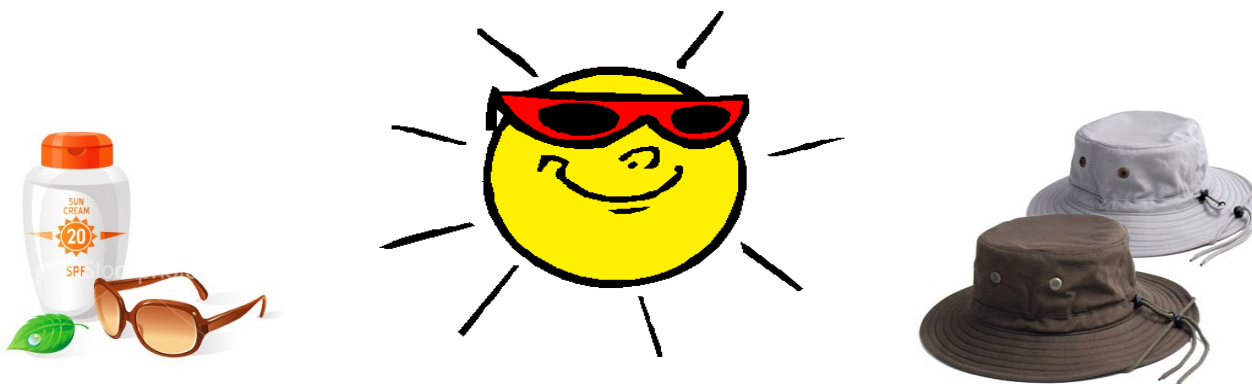


Summer Sun Protection



It is already June and with the long winter we just had, we are happy summer has arrived. The time spent working and playing outside has increased and we need to take precautions to protect our skin and eyes from the damaging effects of the sun. It is important to protect your skin all year long, but the sun's rays are strongest in the spring and summer.

The number of new cases of skin cancer and the number of deaths caused by skin cancer are rapidly rising in the United States, according to OSHA. This is particularly bad news since the numbers of cases for most cancers have been declining in recent years.

Exposure to sunlight can cause cancer at any age. The eyes and the skin are the most susceptible to sun damage. While sun exposure can cause cancer, it also causes premature aging of the skin, wrinkles, cataracts and other eye problems. People need to be especially careful in the sun if they fall into any of the following risk categories:

- Numerous moles, irregular moles, or large moles;
- Freckles or burn before tanning;
- Fair skin, or blond, red, or light brown hair; or
- Spend a lot of time outdoors.

Exposure to sunlight and its ultraviolet radiation is the number one source of damage to the skin and the cause of skin cancer. For people who work outdoors, five important steps to protect themselves against UV radiation and skin cancer include:

1. Wear protective clothing to cover as much skin as possible. Be sure that the clothing does not transmit visible light by holding your hand behind the fabric and in front of a light source. If you can see your hand the fabric does not offer enough protection.
2. Use a sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher and one labeled as broad spectrum (effective against both UVA and UVB). Apply sunscreen at least 15 minutes prior to going outdoors and reapply every two hours.
3. Wear a wide-brimmed hat. Baseball caps do not protect the back of the neck or the tops of ears where most skin cancers commonly develop.
4. Wear sunglasses that block UV rays.
5. Limit direct sun exposure especially between 10 AM and 4 PM.

While it is very important to protect against developing skin cancer, it is also important to monitor damage already done to skin. Early detection is important in the cure for skin cancer. Warning signs include a spot on the skin that is changing in shape, size or color, over a month to a year. You can learn more about skin cancer with a visit to the American Cancer Society web page at www.cancer.org.