

From the Parish Nurse

Summer in the Sun Can be Fun but Costly

Prevent Sun Damage

- Limit exposure
- Cover up skin
- Use sunscreen
- Sunscreen is not for babies less than 6 months of age
- Check for FDA approved products
- Wear protective sunglasses
- Do skin checks (free at Health Fair on September 23rd)

According to the American Cancer Society: "Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. It accounts for nearly half of all cancers in the United States. More than 1 million cases of non-melanoma skin cancer are found in this country each year. The American Cancer Society estimates that about 62,190 new melanomas will be diagnosed in the United States during 2006." Unprotected ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure from sunlight and some artificial

sources like tanning booths can lead to skin cancer depending on the strength and length of exposure. Additionally UV exposure increases one's risk of cataracts and certain eye problems. Darker skinned individuals are less likely to develop skin cancer than the lighter skinned person however this does not mean they immune from skin cancer or are not at an increased risk for cataracts, eye disorders and immune system suppression.

According to the American Cancer Society:

Aside from skin tone, other factors can also affect your risk of damage from UV light. You need to be especially careful in the sun if you:

- ✦ have lots of moles, irregular moles, or large moles
- ✦ have freckles and burn before tanning
- ✦ have fair skin or blond, red, or light brown hair
- ✦ were previously treated for skin cancer
- ✦ have a family history of skin cancer, especially melanoma
- ✦ live or vacation at high altitudes (UV radiation increases 4% to 5% for every 1,000 feet above sea level)
- ✦ live or vacation in tropical or subtropical climates
- ✦ work indoors all week and then get a tan on weekends
- ✦ spend a lot of time outdoors
- ✦ have certain autoimmune diseases, such as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE, or "lupus")
- ✦ have had an organ transplant
- ✦ take medicines that lower your immunity
- ✦ take oral contraceptives (birth control pills)

- ✦ take tetracycline, sulfa drugs or certain other antibiotics
- ✦ take naproxen sodium or certain other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
- ✦ take phenothiazines (major tranquilizers and anti-nausea drugs)
- ✦ take tricyclic antidepressants
- ✦ take thiazide diuretics (medicines used for high blood pressure and some heart conditions)
- ✦ take sulfonylureas (a form of oral anti-diabetic medication)

There are a number of things that can be done to prevent skin damage.

1: Limit direct exposure to the sun during midday. (10 A.M. to 4 P.M.) Remember the sun's UV rays are present even on a cloudy day, when in water and they reflect off of the snow in the winter.

2: Wear clothing to cover up the skin. Dry, long sleeved tops and long pants or a skirt made of dark, closely knit fabrics is best. Also wear a hat with a 2 to 3 inch brim to protect the face, neck, and ears.

3: Use sunscreen with a SPF (skin protective factor) **of 15 or higher.** Apply sunscreen generously to the dry skin (before makeup or insect repellent) preferably 20 to 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply sun screen approximately every two hours and be aware that even products labeled "waterproof" only provide protection for at least 80 minutes, "water resistant" types for 40 minutes and all types wipe off when towel drying. Reapply liberally in accor-

dance with manufacturer instructions. Don't forget sunscreen lip balm to protect the surface of the lips.

4: The American Cancer Society web site indicates that **sunscreen should not be used on babies younger than 6 months of age.** Shade the babies, use protective clothing and limit their sun exposure.

5: Always **check to see if a tanning product has been approved by the FDA** (Food and Drug Administration) before using it.

6: Children and adults need to wear sunglasses that block 99% to 100% of UVA and UVB radiation. Sunglasses labeled "cosmetic" block or those with no labels are unlikely to provide adequate protection. Children need smaller versions of real, protective adult sunglasses -- not toy sunglasses.

7: Do monthly skin checks noting in particular changes skin color, size, pigmentation and shape of moles or blemishes. Always seek medical attention if in doubt.

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