

SUN SAFETY

It seems that in Michigan the sun does not grace us enough with its presence. But, when those summer months roll around, we sure do love it and soak up every bit of those beautiful rays. Whether you are out spending the day at Metro Beach, on a boat in Lake St.Clair, or playing an intense game of miniature golf at CJ Barrymore's it is important to protect yourself from the sun. While the sun is beautiful it can have some ugly effects on our bodies. It can cause nasty sunburns, eye problems, heat exhaustion, and skin cancer. So have your fun in the sun but remember to play it safe.

Skin Cancer

Your skin is the largest organ of your body, and it requires a lot of tender love and care. Annually, there are more than 1 million cases of skin cancer diagnosed in the U.S. There are more new cases of skin cancer than incidences of breast, colon, lung and prostate cancer combined. Basal Cell Carcinoma is the most common type of skin cancer. The second most common form is Squamous Cell Carcinoma. Melanoma is the deadliest form of all the skin cancers. Anyone with a history of exposure to the sun is at risk for any type of skin cancer. People with blond or red hair, blue, green or gray eyes, or people with fair skin are at the greatest risk. There are a few simple things you can do on a daily basis to help protect yourself from the sun's harmful rays:



- Do not burn
- Avoid tanning and UV tanning booths
- Use a sunscreen with a minimum of SPF 15 every day
- Cover up with clothing, hats and sunglasses
- Seek shade between 10am-4pm
- Examine your skin head-to-toe every month
- See a physician once a year for a professional skin exam

SP... What?

SPF! The label SPF followed by a number on the front of your sunscreen bottle really does have an important meaning. SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor. The number right behind SPF, usually anywhere from 15-50, is the amount of protection from



the sun you are receiving. If you look at this protection in terms of percentages, a SPF 15 blocks about 93% of UVB rays, SPF 50 blocks roughly 99%. That small difference may not seem like a big deal, but if you are sun sensitive or have a history of skin cancer that small percentage difference can make a huge impact. Regardless of the amount of SPF your sunscreen has, it will not work properly if you do not apply it 30 minutes before exposure to the sun and reapply every two hours. Reapplication is also needed after getting wet or sweating, even if it says waterproof. The sun is at its hottest from 10 a.m. - 4p.m., so seek shade during this time of day. Keep infants out of the sun at all times. Sunscreen is safe for children over six months of age.

To view a list of products approved by the skin cancer foundation, check out:

<http://www.skincancer.org/seal-of-recommendation/>

Sunburn

Few things are more physically uncomfortable than sunburn. Red, irritated, hot, itchy skin can be miserable. Signs of sunburn start to show within a few hours of sun exposure. If you are unfortunate enough to have sunburn, there are a few things you can do to make yourself more comfortable.



- Take a cool shower or bath. Adding ½ cup of baking soda, oatmeal, or cornstarch to bath water may add some relief
- Apply an Aloe Vera lotion several times a day
- If blistering occurs, leave blisters intact to aid healing and avoid infection. If the blisters do open, apply an antibiotic ointment
- If needed, an over the counter pain killer such as Advil, Tylenol, or Motrin can be used

Do not use home remedies such as butter or petroleum jelly. These will only slow down the healing process. If you experience immediate complications such as a fever, rash, or if the skin starts to blister badly, see a doctor immediately.



Protecting Your Peepers

While oversized sunglasses might be the craze on the summer runway, they are in fact good for more than just a fashion statement. The sun can be extremely damaging to your precious baby blues. The sun's rays can cause conditions such as vision loss, cataracts, macular degeneration to the eye, eyelid cancer and you can even get

sunburn on your cornea. Ouch! Shades with lenses that block UV lighting are your best defense against sun damage to your eyes. However, fashion and high prices do not always equal protection. The sunglasses should have a label clearly indicating its ability to block UV rays. The more skin the glasses protect the better. Anything from wraparound sports style sunglasses, to big round high fashion glasses, to aviator style shades are good choice. Choose a look that is most comfortable to you and will provide you with adequate protection. Wearing hats can also be a great way to help shield your eyes and face from the sun. Remember that the sun's rays are always out, even on a cloudy day or in the middle of December, so wear protection year round. If you are having symptoms of eye problems, see a physician. Ophthalmologists are the experts in eye conditions or you may need to see a dermatologist if you are having a problem with the skin around your eyes.

Heat Exhaustion

Too much sun can also cause heat related syndromes, such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Signs of heat exhaustion are sudden and happen shortly after inadequate fluid intake, heavy perspiration, or excessive exercise. Symptoms are similar to shock and include:

- Nausea
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Heavy sweating
- Low blood pressure
- Low grade fever
- Headache
- Cramps
- Cool, moist, pale skin
- Fatigue



If you suspect possible heat exhaustion get out the sun and heat immediately. Lay down with your legs slightly elevated and drink plenty of water. It may also help to loosen clothing and have someone spray you with cool water. If you have a fever higher than 102, faint, or have a seizure, call for emergency medical assistance.

Looking for some summer fun? Check out the 2009 Fun Guide from the MISD. Click on the link below or stop in the MISD building to pick up a copy of the booklet. It is filled with hundreds of idea, places to visit, and activities for the whole year. Have fun!

<http://www.misd.net/EarlyChild/PDF/2009FunGuide.pdf>

Sources

<http://www.skincancer.org/>