

Information about Skin Cancer Prevention

There are two types of skin cancer, non-melanoma (NMSC) and melanoma skin cancer. Melanoma is more serious. Most skin cancers come from getting too much sun and/or using tanning beds. Both give off a type of radiation (UV) that can harm skin cells and lead to skin cancer.

Tips to help you prevent skin cancer

BE SUN WISE

Since UV radiation (even on **cloudy days**) causes skin cancer, it is important that you protect yourself against these harmful UV rays.

- Stay in the shade as much as possible. About 11 am to 3 pm is the most serious time for the sun's rays to damage your skin.
- Cover as much skin as you can (collar, long sleeves/pants), when you cannot stay out of the sun.
- Wear a hat large enough to shade your face, head, ears and neck and wear sunglasses (wraparounds).
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 or more. Make sure it includes both UVA and UVB protection (broad spectrum). The label will give you this information.



Summer Image created by: www.freepik.com

Sunscreens that are recommended by professionals can be found at:

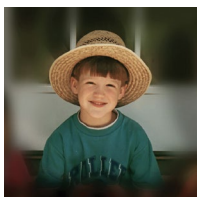
<https://dermatology.ca/public-patients/recognized-products/sunscreen/>



- Put on sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside and put lots on children. Remember to include ears, nose, lips and tops of feet. Put sunscreen on again every two hours and after swimming/drying off. That includes if you or your children are sweating heavily (even when the sunscreen says it is waterproof or water-resistant).
- Avoid tanning and **never** use indoor tanning beds. There is no such thing as a base tan that will “protect you” from getting sunburned.

Sun “mistakes” that can lead to sunburn

- Falling asleep in the sun (such as at the beach or on a patio).
- Playing near water, white sand or snow—you are twice as likely to get sunburned.
- Drinking alcohol and not being aware of how much sun you are getting.
- Not putting on ENOUGH sunscreen: most people use about **half** of what is needed. Try putting on twice as much as you think is enough.
- A tan does not protect you from getting a sunburn.
- Having darker skin does not automatically protect you from sunburn. You still need to wear sunscreen, hat and protective clothing outdoors.
- Being outdoors on a cloudy or cold day without sunscreen on exposed skin.



Babies and young children: Should NOT be out in the sun at all if possible.

Keep hats and clothes on babies and young children and make sure they are in the shade as much as possible. Although the Canadian Dermatology Association says that sunscreen can be used on babies under 6 months, it is better to keep them totally out of the sun (such as covered in a stroller). For babies older than 6 months and young children, sunscreen can be put on skin (face, backs of hands, tops of feet) that is not covered by clothing and a big hat.



PATIENT ADVISOR—PLEASE FEEL FREE TO COPY THIS PAGE

If you are at risk of melanoma, or have already been diagnosed with it, your health care provider may suggest other things for you to do, on top of what you are doing to help prevent skin cancer (see the Patient Handout).

1. Check for skin cancer by doing skin self-examinations (SSE) at least yearly—or more often if your provider thinks you should.

For help on how to do your own skin self-examination in pictures and videos, click on: <https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/skin-cancer/find/check-skin>



- Look at your body in a full-length mirror with lots of light for you to see. Start with the front of your upper body including your face, lips, ears, and eyes.
 - Next look at your neck, shoulders, chest (including under breasts if applicable) and abdomen.
 - Using both full-length and hand-held mirrors, check behind your ears, neck and upper back. Part your hair (or use a hair dryer to blow hair to show your scalp) to check all areas of your scalp. Get help from a partner or friend if needed.
 - Lift both arms and check all sides of arms, hands, fingernails, underarms and between fingers.
 - With hand mirror, check your back, buttocks, backs of thighs and calves.
 - Finally, check fronts of legs and feet, including soles, toenails, toes and in between each toe.
2. **Use a cell phone app** such as Miiskin: <https://miiskin.com/>. It can help you keep track of your skin spots or moles with photos and will remind you to do your self-exam regularly.
3. **Use the ABCDE formula** (described below) to help you decide if any of the moles or spots look like melanoma when you do your self-exam. Talk with your health care provider if you think there are any changes in the way a mole or spot looks when you use the ABCDE formula.

For pictures and more about ABCDE go to:

<https://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/melanoma/melanoma-warning-signs-and-images/#abcde>

“A” stands for asymmetrical—does the mole/spot look different on each side?

“B” stands for border—do the outside edges look ragged or uneven?

“C” stands for colour—does the mole/spot have different colours within it?

“D” stands for diameter—is the mole or spot larger than the size of the eraser on a pencil?

“E” stands for evolving—has there been any change in the mole or spot over the past few weeks or months?

4. Tips to help you get ready for an appointment, if you have been diagnosed as having melanoma or have been told you are at “high risk”:
- Take off all nail polish.
 - Wear your hair down/loose.
 - Take off all makeup.
 - Bring any photos you have taken of your “moles”/spots (on your cell phone or otherwise).

For more information see: <https://www.skincancer.org/early-detection/annual-exams/>.

Resources for More Information and Support Services

Mayo Clinic slide show on melanoma is available:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/melanoma/multimedia/melanoma/vid-20084726>

Melanoma Network

<https://www.melanomanetwork.ca>

Also provides “virtual support groups” for patients or family members



Canadian Cancer Society (choose your own province)

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/?region=bc>

