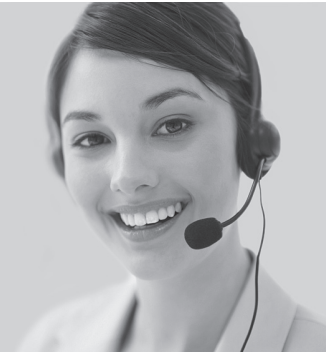


“It was great to talk with you.

Thank you for your interest in ‘Choosing and Using Sunscreen.’ I hope you find this tip sheet helpful.

Please give me a call if you have more questions about this or other topics.

As your UPMC Health Plan health coach, I’m ready to help in any way I can.”



Most of us love our fun in the sun. But the word is out: sun exposure ages your skin and it causes skin cancer.

Be smart. Do whatever you can to limit your sun exposure and avoid burning. Your risk of skin cancer increases if:

- You have had a large amount of sun exposure *over your lifetime*. Even brief exposures all year round can add up to major damage over the years.
- You have had one or more severe, blistering sunburns, either as a child or as an adult.

Review the sun safety tips below. Check the ones that are not yet a habit for you.

- Stay out of the sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.**
  
- Cover up with lightweight, tightly woven clothing and UV-blocking sunglasses.**
  - For the best protection, wear long sleeves and long pants or a long skirt.
  - Choose dark blue, black, or solid bright colors.
  - Avoid loosely woven clothes. Hold your clothing up to a light. The more you can see through it, the less it will protect you from the sun’s rays.
  - Some clothes and swimsuits are specially treated for sun protection. Check the UPF (UV protection factor) rating. The higher the rating the better.
  - Wear a tightly woven hat. The brim should be at least 3" wide and angle down. It should shade your face, ears, and neck.

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**UPMC HEALTH PLAN**

## Choosing and Using Sunscreen

- Wear sunglasses labeled with “meets ANSI UV requirements” or “UV absorption up to 400 m.” That means the glasses block 99 percent of UV rays. Most cosmetic glasses block only about 70 percent. Aim for a snug fit so that UV rays cannot get through the top or the sides of the glasses.
- Avoid tanning and UV tanning booths. A “base tan” from an indoor tanning salon does not prevent sunburn. Tanned skin is damaged skin.
  
- Examine your skin head-to-toe every month.** If you notice any changes, see your doctor.
  
- Choose a sunscreen wisely:**
  - For everyday use, choose a **broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or higher.**
    - Broad spectrum means it protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Both types damage the skin and increase your risk of skin cancer.
    - The SPF means how much longer it will take for your skin to redden than if you were not wearing the sunscreen.
    - Example: If you use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15, it will take 15 times longer for your skin to redden than if you did not use it.
    - An SPF 15 sunscreen screens 93 percent of the sun’s UVB rays. An SPF 30 protects against 97 percent. An SPF 50, 98 percent.
- Are you going to be active outdoors for a long period of time? Choose a **water-resistant, broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.**
- Do you wear makeup? Look for moisturizers, foundations, eye creams, and lipsticks with SPF. Do not wear shiny, high gloss lipsticks. They can attract UV rays to your lips. If you want a wet look, wear a colored lipstick under a gloss.
- Throw out sunscreen after the expiration date on the container. Most last 2-3 years. You may need to shake the bottle to remix the ingredients after a long time in storage.
  
- Apply sunscreen properly:**
  - Use a lot.** Use at least 1 ounce of sunscreen to cover an adult’s arms, legs, neck, and face. An ounce is 2 tablespoons or about an adult palmful. Most people do not use nearly enough.
  - Use it every day.** Apply it year-round, even on cloudy days, 30 minutes before going outside. It takes time for sunscreen to be absorbed by your skin.

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UPMC HEALTH PLAN

## Choosing and Using Sunscreen

- Reapply it often.** The minimum is every 2 hours.
  - Check the label. Sunscreens labeled “waterproof” often need to be reapplied after 80 minutes. Those labeled “water resistant” may need to be reapplied after only 40 minutes.
  - Reapply right away after swimming, toweling dry, or excessive sweating.
- Keep in mind that you are at an increased risk of sunburn and skin damage in the snow. UV rays are reflected by snow. Also, if you are in an alpine region, UV radiation levels are higher than at sea level.
- To protect your lips, apply SPF 30+ lip balm or zinc cream.

A note about infants:

- Keep babies from birth to 6 months out of the sun.
- If that is not possible, they should wear sun-protective clothing and a hat.
- Avoid using sunscreen on babies. They are more likely to have an allergic reaction. As a last resort, your pediatrician may say that very small amounts may be used on small areas. Examples are the cheeks and back of the hands.

Try the quiz below to learn some more facts about sun safety:

True or false?	
Older adults do not need to worry about sun exposure. The damage has already been done.	False. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your risk of skin cancer increases with age.</li> <li>• It is never too late to help prevent sun damage. It is never too late to lower your skin cancer risk.</li> </ul>
It is important to wear sunscreen, even if you are going to be inside.	True. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UVB rays cannot get through glass but UVA rays can.</li> <li>• Driving or sitting by a window in the sun can cause skin damage if the sun is shining directly on you.</li> </ul>
I have dark skin so my risk of sun damage is less.	False. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early changes may be harder to notice with darker skin. People with darker skin are often diagnosed with skin cancer at a later, more dangerous stage.</li> </ul>

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## Choosing and Using Sunscreen

Wearing sunglasses is not as important as wearing sunscreen.

False.

- One in 10 skin cancers are found on or around the eyelids.
- Exposing your eyes to the sun also raises your risk of cataracts, macular degeneration, keratitis (a sunburn of the cornea), and cancers of the eye.

For more about sun protection, go to these websites:

- The Skin Cancer Foundation ([www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org))
- The American Cancer Society (<http://www.cancer.org/healthy/besafeinthesun/index>)

### Take Action

Choose two of the tips you checked above. Make a plan to put them into action this week.  
*Be specific.*

For example:

1. On Saturday, I will go to the drugstore. I will compare sunscreens. I will buy one for everyday use that is broad spectrum, with an SPF of 15 or higher.
2. I will apply the sunscreen in the morning before I go to work, on at least three days next week.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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