

# health awareness



A COUNTY HEALTH POOL PUBLICATION

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## UV SAFETY MONTH

**S**un safety is never out of season. Summer's arrival means it's time for picnics, trips to the pool and beach -- and a spike in sunburns. But winter skiers and fall hikers need to be as wary of the sun's rays as swimmers do. People who work outdoors need to take precautions, as well.

The need for sun safety has become clear over the past 30 years, with studies showing that excessive exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer and premature aging of the skin. Harmful rays from the sun -- and from sunlamps and tanning beds -- may also cause eye problems, weaken your immune system, and give you unsightly skin spots and wrinkles or "leathery" skin.

Sun damage to the body is caused by invisible ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which reaches us as long wavelengths known as UVA and short wavelengths known as UVB. UVB radiation can cause sunburn. But the longer wavelength UVA is dangerous too, as it can penetrate the skin and damage tissue at deeper levels.

Tanning is a sign of the skin reacting to potentially damaging UV radiation by producing additional pigmentation that provides it with some -- but not nearly enough -- protection against sunburn. In fact, tanned skin is damaged skin.

No matter what our skin color, we're all potential victims of sunburn and the other detrimental effects of excessive exposure to UV radiation. Although

we all need to take precautions to protect our skin, people who need to be especially careful in the sun are those who have:

- Pale skin
- Blonde, red, or light brown hair
- A history of skin cancer
- A family member who's had skin cancer

If you have an illness and take medications, ask your doctor about extra sun care precautions, because some drugs may increase sensitivity to the sun.

Cosmetics that contain alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs) also may increase sun sensitivity and susceptibility to sunburn. Look for the FDA's recommended sunburn alert statement on products that contain AHAs.

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## Reduce Time in the Sun

This is especially recommended from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when the sun's burning rays are strongest. Even on an overcast day, up to 80% of the sun's UV rays can get through the clouds. Stay in the shade as much as possible throughout the day.

## Dress With Care

Wear clothes that protect your body. Cover as much of your body as possible if you plan to be outside on a sunny day. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves, and long pants. Sun-protective clothing is now available in stores. However, the FDA does not regulate such products unless the manufacturer intends to make a medical claim. Consider using an umbrella for shade.

## Be Serious About Sunscreen

Check sunscreen labels to make sure you get:

- A high "sun protection factor" (SPF); SPF represents the degree to which a sunscreen can protect the skin from sunburn. The higher the number, the better the protection. Consider a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 30.
- "Broad spectrum" protection -- sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB rays
- Water resistance -- sunscreen that stays on your skin longer, even if it gets wet; "water-resistant" does not mean "waterproof." Water-resistant sunscreens need to be reapplied as in-

structed on the label.

## Tips for Applying Sunscreen

- Apply the recommended amount of sunscreen evenly to all uncovered skin, especially your lips, nose, ears, neck, hands, and feet. Most of us do not apply a heavy enough layer of sunscreen to get the amount of SPF the package claims.
- Check the label for the correct amount of time to apply sunscreen before you go out.
- If the label doesn't give a time, allow about 15 to 30 minutes before going into the sun.
- If you don't have much hair, apply sunscreen to the top of your head, or wear a hat.

# BENEFITS CORNER

## CHP Rx Programs

Retail Pharmacy- 30 day supply from in-network pharmacy

Mail Order Service- 90-day supply from Express Scripts

Prior Authorization- Requires a view of certain drugs before they are covered by CHP-to ensure safety and affordability

Specialty Pharmacy- Expensive drugs for treating complex conditions. Accredo is our Specialty Pharmacy.

Other Rx programs that may apply to our members are; Dose Optimization, Step Therapy and Quantity Limits.

These programs assist CHP members with managing drugs to control costs and receive the best treatment results

For a list of drugs covered on the formulary, go to [www.anthem.com](http://www.anthem.com) or call 1-866-698-0087. If you would like more information about these programs, you can contact your CHP Benefits Administrator at 303-861-0507

- Reapply to sun exposed skin at least every one to two hours. Read the label to see how often.
- Give babies and children extra care in the sun. Ask a doctor before applying sunscreen to children under age 6 months.
- Apply sunscreen to children older than age 6 months every time they go out.

## Check for Skin Cancer

Check your skin regularly for signs of skin cancer. Look for changes in the size, shape, color or feel of birthmarks, moles and spots. If you find any changes or find sores that are not healing, see your doctor.

– From [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)