

# Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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## Practice Safe Sun

**M**ost people may consider sun safety a topic that belongs in the boring category; but consider this:

1. 50-80% of our lifetime sun-exposure occurs before age 18.
2. Many use only 50% of the optimal amount of sunscreen and often neglect to reapply it as the day goes on.
3. Early sun exposure is related to aging skin, wrinkles, and the later development of skin cancers. The most deadly, melanoma, has continued to increase over the past decades, perhaps because, It is now felt that exposure to UVA ultraviolet rays may be more important in causing later skin cancer.

Healthy skin is certainly worth all your effort. Here are some reminders.

### Sun-exposure-Brief Primer

The sun contains three kinds of ultraviolet (UV - light with very short wavelengths) rays: UVA, rays that alter our pigmentation to produce a tan; UVB the primary sunburn rays that damage our skin's DNA causing carcinomas, cancerous tumors; and UVC, the



most dangerous. However they are absorbed by the atmosphere and don't make it to the ground.

UV rays interact with and are absorbed by your skin's pigment cells (melanocytes) .

There is no such thing as complete protection from UV rays. The sun's rays are strongest in the summer, especially between 10 am and 4 pm. Use the "shadow rule": when your shadow is shorter than you are, the UV rays are most intense.

UV rays reflect off water and snow, increasing exposure. Two-thirds of UV rays penetrate clouds and can cause unexpected sunburns.

The "SPF" sun protection factor, on sunscreens estimates how well the UV rays are blocked from reaching the skin. A factor

of 15 means that sun exposure of 15 minutes is equivalent to about 1 minute exposure without sunscreen. However, SPF refers to the ability to block UVB, not UVA.

### Tips For Protection From Harmful Rays

- Wear sun-protective clothing. Look for summer clothing with Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF - similar to SPF in sunscreen) of 15 or greater on the label.
- Wear caps or hats with broad bills that shade the face, head, neck and ears.
- Use sunglasses with both UVA and UVB protection. Cataracts as an adult may, in part, be related to early unprotected

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eye exposure to UV rays.

- Play in the shade. Bring an umbrella or pop-up tent along to avoid direct sun.
- No sunbathing! Remember: tan skin is damaged skin.
- Use sunscreen liberally. There is no evidence at all that sunscreen is harmful to children.
- Pick a PABA-free “hypoallergenic” sunscreen that offers both UVA and UVB protection.
- All sunscreens block UVB, but not all do a good job with UVA. Read the label: the best UVA protectors contain a chemical-free sun “blocker”, like zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, and/or the sunscreen avobenzone.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or more whenever you are exposed to the sun.
- An SPF of more than 30 is not necessarily better, as the increased concentration of sunscreen is more likely to cause skin irritation while offering very little extra protection. Increasing SPF from 30 to 40 requires 25% more sunscreen with only 0.8% more protection.
- Apply sunscreen liberally and let dry about 30 minutes before exposure.
- Don’t forget the nooks, crannies, and high-exposure areas—ears, feet, lips, noses.

## Benefits Corner

### Children’s Health Insurance Program and Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA)

President Barack Obama signed the Children’s Health Insurance Program and Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA) on Feb. 4, 2009. CHIPRA amends the special enrollment HIPAA portability requirements. Currently, the special enrollment provisions of the law require group health plans to allow employees and dependents to enroll in the plan if they lose other coverage.

CHIPRA now requires plans to allow employees and dependents to enroll in the plan within 60 days, if they lose Medicaid and/or State Children’s Health Coverage (CHIP). Effective April 2009.

Self funded plans, such as CHP, do have the option to opt out of HIPAA special enrollment provisions; however, the CHP Board of Directors has chosen to implement these provisions as there is no adverse financial impact to the members.

The provision has been updated in the CHP Plan Documents and Contact Manual and is available on the website, [www.ctsi.org](http://www.ctsi.org).

- Remember: some sunscreens are “water resistant”, which means they last about 40 minutes in the water; and others are “waterproof”, which means they wear off after about 80 minutes in the water. So, reapply every two to three hours, or right after swimming or sweating as the day wears on.

No matter what our skin color or age, we’re all potential victims of sunburn and the other detrimental effects of excessive exposure to UV radiation. Source: Webmd.com

