

# Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



June, 2010

## Practice Safe Sun

**T**he 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.

Summer’s arrival means it’s time for picnics, trips to the pool -- 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.

### Reduce Time in the Sun

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, tan 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.
- been treated for skin cancer.
- a family member who’s had skin cancer.

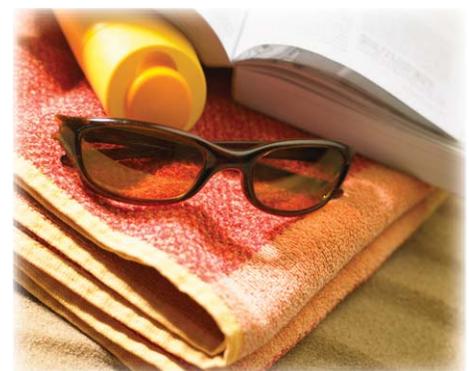
Stay in the shade as much as possible throughout the day. This is

especially recommended from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when the sun’s rays are strongest. Even on an overcast day, up to 80% of the sun’s UV rays can get through the clouds.

### 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.

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## Practice Safe Sun

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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 instructed on the label.

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.

## Benefits Corner

### As a reminder,

Deep sedation as administered by an anesthesiologist is not considered to be covered when related to a colonoscopy unless it is considered a medical necessity. The Gastroenterologist Society has determined that moderate sedation is appropriate and less of a risk for healthy individuals related to colonoscopies.

Therefore, conscious/moderate sedation is approved with a colonoscopy and does not require authorization. Anesthesia (deeper sedation) does require authorization and has to go through medical review. Your provider would have to call Anthem customer service for authorization. Your provider may request that you sign a form indicating that you understand that deeper sedation and requirement of an anesthesiologist may not be covered under your insurance for this procedure.

If you have any questions regarding a colonoscopy procedure and the related anesthesia, please contact Anthem customer service at 1-866-698-0087 or your CHP Benefits Administrator at 303-861-0507.

### Don't Forget the Eyes

Sunlight reflecting off snow, sand, or water further increases exposure to UV radiation, increasing your risk of developing eye problems such as cataracts. The right sunglasses can protect your eyes.

Long hours on the beach or in the snow without adequate eye protection also can result in a short-term condition known as photokeratitis, or reversible sunburn of the cornea. This painful condition -- also known as “snow blindness” -- can cause temporary loss of vision.

When buying sunglasses, look for a label that specifically offers 99%-100% UV protection. This assures that the glasses block both forms of UV radiation.

Eyewear should be labeled “sunglasses.” Be wary of dark or tinted eyewear sold as fashion accessories that may provide little or no protection from UV or visible light.

Ask an eye care professional to test your sunglasses if you’re not sure of their level of UV protection.

Sun safety is never out of season. Practice safe sun.

Sources: WebMD.com

