

Fast Facts: Exposure

- Your skin can be damaged by the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays with **as little as 15 minutes** of exposure.¹
- Indoor tanning beds emit the same UV rays as the sun but in much higher amounts. Compared to sunlight, indoor tanning beds expose your skin to **12 times more** UV-A rays.²
- Whether they come from tanning beds or the sun, UV rays lead to **premature aging of the skin** and can cause wrinkles, rashes, leather-like texture, and dark spots.²
- Most seriously, exposure to UV rays increases the risk of developing all types of **skin cancer**, including the deadliest type of skin cancer, melanoma.¹

Fast Facts: Skin Cancer Risk Factors

- **History of sunburns and/or tanning bed use.** Both blistering sunburns and cumulative sun exposure increase a person's risk of skin cancer. Tanning beds also emit the same dangerous ultraviolet radiation and cause an increased risk of skin cancer.
- **Light skin.** Anyone can get skin cancer. However, having a fair complexion does place you at a higher risk for developing most types of skin cancer.
- **Moles.** People with many moles, especially 50 or more, are at an increased risk of developing skin cancer. Irregularly shaped moles called dysplastic nevi come with an elevated risk of melanoma.
- **Environment.** Having a job outdoors and living near the equator increases a person's risk of developing skin cancer.
- **Immunosuppression.** Having a history of organ transplant, certain cancers, or taking medication that suppresses your immune system all cause an increased risk of skin cancer.
- **Family History.** Having a family member who was diagnosed with skin cancer increases the risk of developing skin cancer.

If you have any of these risk factors, be sure to visit your board-certified dermatologist regularly for full-body skin examinations.

Fast Facts: Skin Cancer Types

Major Types of Skin Cancer

1. Basal Cell Carcinoma

The most common skin cancer with 4-5 million cases every year in the United States

Often presents as a pink, pearly nodule with central ulceration and/or telangiectasias (dilated blood vessels)



Photos: VisualDx

2. Squamous Cell Carcinoma

The second most common skin cancer in the general population with around 1 million cases every year in the United States

Often presents as a scaly, pink or red plaque



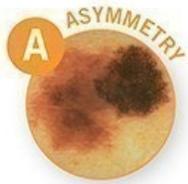
Photo: VisualDx

3. Melanoma

The second most common cancer in young women age 15-29

Often presents as a mole with some (or all) of these features:

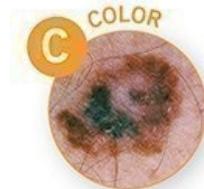
A: Asymmetry



B: Irregular borders



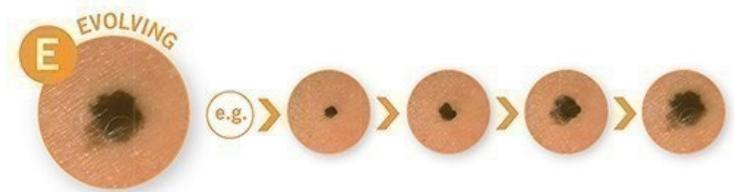
C: Color is not uniform throughout



D: Diameter greater than a pencil eraser



E: Evolving over time



Photos: American Academy of Dermatology

Fast Facts: Protection & Prevention

- Avoiding **indoor tanning** is an important way to reduce your risk of skin cancer, as the artificial UV rays from tanning beds are estimated to cause upward of 400,000 cases of skin cancer annually in the US.³
- Protecting your skin against natural UV is equally important. Experiencing just one **blistering sunburn** can double your chance of developing skin cancer.³
- To stay safe in the sun, the American Academy of Dermatology recommends seeking shade, wearing **protective clothing**, and using **broad spectrum sunscreen** (providing both UV-A and UV-B protection) with **SPF 30** or higher.⁴
- Research has shown that consistent, daily use of sunscreen can **cut the risk of developing melanoma in half**.³
- Sunscreens with minerals such as **zinc oxide or titanium dioxide** as active ingredients are considered “**physical sunscreens**” that deflect UV rays. These are a good option for people with **sensitive or acne-prone** skin.
- Sunscreens containing active ingredients such as **oxybenzone, avobenzone, or octisalate** are considered “**chemical sunscreens**” that absorb UV rays. These tend to absorb into skin easiest without leaving behind a residue.
- Regardless of which type of sunscreen you wear, remember to apply it generously **every two hours** and reapply after swimming or sweating.⁴

Fact or Myth?

If I get a base tan from a tanning bed, I won't burn when I spend time outside.

Myth. Even with a tan, your skin can still burn. Tanned skin is a sign the DNA in your skin cells has been damaged. Further UV exposure will cause additional damage, potentially leading to a burn.

If I use a tanning bed just a few times, it won't cause any negative lasting effects.

Myth. Just one session in a tanning bed can significantly increase your risk of developing skin cancer. Research shows that with one indoor tanning session, the risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma increases by 67%, basal cell carcinoma by 29%, and melanoma by 20%.⁵

My sunscreen has SPF 60, which means I will be protected from sunburn for 60 minutes.

Myth. Sun protection factor (SPF) does not represent the length of time for which the product is effective. Rather, a sunscreen's SPF indicates the fraction of damaging UV rays capable of reaching your skin through a thick, even layer of the product. For example, an SPF 8 sunscreen allows 1/8 of the sun's UV rays to reach your skin, while sunscreens with higher SPF ratings allow smaller fractions through. Regardless of SPF, sunscreen should be reapplied every 2 hours (or sooner if sweating or swimming).

SPF 30 sunscreen provides almost as much protection as SPF 45.

Fact. A thick, even layer of SPF 30 sunscreen blocks about 97% of the sun's radiation, allowing only 3.3% (1/30) of the UV rays to reach your skin. Similarly applied SPF 45 sunscreen provides only slightly more protection by blocking all but 2.2% (1/45) of these rays. It is recommended to use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, and any increase in SPF above 30 offers only a minimal increase in protection.

I have darker skin, so I don't need to be worried about skin cancer.

Myth. While skin cancer is found less often in people of color, it tends to be diagnosed at a later stage and with a worse prognosis. Though the increased melanin in darker skin offers some natural protection against UV radiation, it does not provide immunity. Regardless of your skin color, consistent sunscreen use and regular skin examinations are recommended.⁶

I don't need to wear sunscreen when it is cloudy.

Myth. UV rays can cause damage to your skin through the clouds. In fact, clouds only block 20% of UV rays. Certain types of clouds can even cause the UV rays to be magnified and have a stronger effect on your skin.

I should apply sunscreen every two hours.

Fact. Reapply sunscreen every two hours, even if it is cool or cloudy out. If you are going swimming, reapply as soon as you get out of the water.

I should protect my eyes and lips from the sun, too.

Fact. UV rays can cause damage anywhere on your body. Be sure to use UV-protective sunglasses and sun protective lip balm (SPF 30+).

I don't have to wear sunscreen in the winter.

Myth. You can get sun damage during any time of the year. The temperature does not impact the ability of the UV rays to cause skin damage. UV rays can reflect off snow, so take extra precautions if you are participating in outdoor winter sports.

I should wear sunscreen even when I'm in the car.

Fact. Glass filters only 25% of UV-A. While UV-B is filtered out, the effects of UV-A are still present. UV-A is responsible for some of the aging effects of the skin, such as wrinkles and sunspots.

References

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Content creation: Rachel Samuelson and Marissa Lobl

Webpage design: Aubree Ford