

## Education and Prevention

Boise Skin Clinic, PLLC educates patients of all ages on the importance of minimizing UV exposure to reduce the risk of skin cancer.

Marnie Ririe, MD FAAD provides counseling and recommendations for products specifically formulated to protect the skin for patients of all ages.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States and the **most preventable**. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important environmental factor in developing skin cancer. This makes skin cancer a largely preventable disease when sun protective practices and behaviors are consistently applied and used. UV rays from artificial sources of light, such as tanning beds and sun lamps are just as dangerous as those from the sun, and should also be avoided. Unfortunately, despite the fact that both tanning and burning can increase one's risk of skin cancer, most Americans do not protect themselves from UV rays.

## Who Is at Risk?

Although anyone can get skin cancer, individuals with certain risk factors are particularly susceptible. The following increase a person's risk of developing skin cancer:

- Light skin color, hair color or eye color
- Family history of skin cancer
- Personal history of skin cancer
- Chronic exposure to the sun
- History of sunburns early in life
- Certain types and a large number of moles
- Freckles, which indicate sun sensitivity and sun damage

## Preventing Skin Cancer: Sun Protection Options

People can take many simple steps to plan ahead and protect themselves from the sun's UV rays. These options are important to remember all year round and during all outdoor activities, and not just when at the beach or pool.

**SEEK SHADE** — Because the sun's UV rays are strongest and do the most damage during midday, outdoor activities should be avoided at this time. If this is not possible, then finding the shade of a tree, beach umbrella, or tent is a practical way to protect the skin.

**COVER UP** — A shirt, beach cover-up, or pants are all good choices. However, a typical shirt actually has a sun protection factor (SPF) rating substantially lower than the recommended SPF 15, so it is wise to double up on protection by using sun screen with at least sun protection factor SPF 15 and stay in the shade when possible.

**GET A HAT** — The head and neck are common sites for skin cancers to occur, so a wide-brimmed hat should be worn to shade the face, ears, scalp, and neck from the sun's UV rays. A hat with a four-inch brim provides the most protection. If a baseball cap is worn, sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 should also be used to protect the ears and neck.

**GRAB SHADES** — Sunglasses help protect the tender skin around the eye. Look for sunglasses that block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays.

**RUB IT ON** — Sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher and both UVA and UVB protection should be used whenever a person spends time outdoors. To be effective, sunscreen needs to be generously applied 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapplied after swimming or sweating. Another option is to apply a sunscreen with zinc or titanium dioxide that will start protecting your skin from the sun as soon as you apply it.