

Sun Exposure Can Cause Cancer and Premature Aging

Living and working in Southern California you are able to enjoy many warm days in the sun. The sun's rays make us feel good, and in the short term, make us look good. Exposure to the sun's damaging rays without protection can lead to skin cancer, which is the most common type of cancer. In 2009, according to the American Cancer Society, 68,720 people were diagnosed with skin cancer. Nearly 9,000 people died from skin cancer that same year.

Sun exposure causes most of the skin changes that we think of as a normal part of aging. Over time, the sun's ultraviolet (UV) light damages the fibers in the skin called elastin. When these fibers breakdown, the skin begins to sag, stretch, and lose its ability to go back into place after stretching. The skin also bruises and tears more easily, taking longer to heal. So while sun damage to the skin may not be apparent when you're young, it will definitely show later in life.

Exposure to the sun causes:

- Pre-cancerous (actinic keratosis) and cancerous (basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma) skin lesions—caused by loss of the skin's immune function;
- Benign tumors;
- Fine and coarse wrinkles;
- Freckles;
- Discolored areas of the skin, called mottled pigmentation;
- Sallowiness—a yellow discoloration of the skin;
- Telangiectasias—the dilation of small blood vessels under the skin;
- Elastosis—the destruction of the elastic tissue causing lines and wrinkles.

Of the three main types of skin cancer, basal cell

and squamous cell cancers are less serious types and make up 95% of all skin cancers. Melanoma, made up of abnormal skin pigment cells called melanocytes, is the most serious form of skin cancer and causes 75% of all cancer deaths. Left untreated, it can spread to other organs and is difficult to control.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the number one cause of skin cancer, but UV light from tanning beds is just as harmful. Exposure to sunlight during the winter months puts you at the same risk as exposure during the summertime.

The most common warning sign of skin cancer is a change on the skin, typically a new mole or skin lesion or a change in an existing mole.

- Basal cell carcinoma may appear as a small, smooth pearly or waxy bump on the face ears and neck; or as a flat, pink/red or brown colored lesion on the trunk or arms and legs.
- Squamous cell carcinoma can appear as a firm, red nodule, or as a rough, scaly flat lesion that may itch, bleed and become crusty. Both basal cell and squamous cell cancers mainly occur on areas of skin frequently exposed to the sun, but can occur anywhere.
- Melanoma usually appears as a pigmented patch or bump. It may resemble a normal mole, but usually has a more irregular appearance.

When looking for melanoma, think ABCD rule that tells you the signs to watch for:

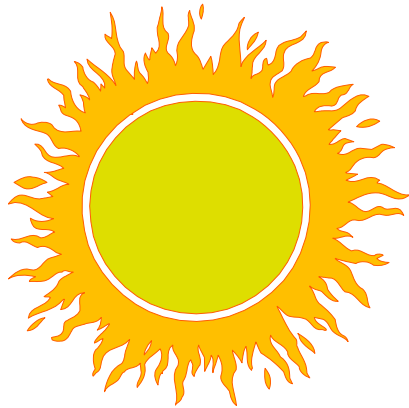
- Asymmetry—the shape of one half doesn't match the other
 - Border—edges are ragged or blurred
 - Color—uneven shades of brown, black, tan, red, white, or blue
 - Diameter—a significant change in size (>6 mm)
- (Source: www.webmd.com)

Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap for Prevention

Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap is a phrase used to help people remember how to best protect their skin from sun damage and skin cancer.

SLIP on a shirt. A tightly woven fabric will protect better than a thin fabric. If light can pass through the fabric that means the sun's rays can too.

SLOP on the sun-screen. For best results, apply sun-screen before going outside. Most experts say to reapply every half-hour and always after swimming or excessive sweating. An SPF of 30 or higher is considered ideal. For babies or for those with fair skin, a higher SPF is suggested. Don't forget to use lip balm with sunscreen and to reapply often.



SLAP on a hat. One with a 2 to 3 inch brim is best.

WRAP. Wear wrap-style sunglasses to protect eyes and the delicate skin around them. Be sure to look for glasses that are labeled as blocking UVA and UVB light.

Keep in mind that sunscreen isn't just for the beach or the swimming pool. Children and adults spend a lot of time playing and working outdoors. Some people feel that it's easiest just to get into a routine of applying sunscreen every day before getting dressed.

Remember tanning beds are never safe. Take advantage of all the wonderful sunless tanning products that are available.

Since we know we can prevent skin cancer by following the recommendations above, it should be a goal of everyone.

Source: (Florida Times)

The Importance of Hydration

Summer heat can create some specific problems for employees who work outdoors or in heat intensive environments. One of the key points to preventing heat related injuries is to make sure employees know how to keep hydrated.

Water is one of the most essential components of the human body. Water regulates the body's temperature, cushions and protects vital organs, and aids the digestive system. Water not only composes 75 percent of all muscle tissue and about 10 percent of fatty tissue, it also acts within each cell to transport nutrients and dispel waste.

Water must be consumed to replace the amount lost each day during basic activities. It is recommended that we drink at least 64 ounces a day. You can meet your body's water needs over the course of a day through a variety of fluids and foods.

For people who are physically active a constant supply of water in the body is essential to performance. Dehydration leads to muscle fatigue and loss of coordination. In a dehydrated state the body is unable to cool itself efficiently, leading to heat exhaustion and possibly heat stroke. Without an adequate supply of water the body will lack energy and muscles may develop cramps. It is important to drink water frequently and drink enough water that you never become thirsty.

Source: (www.npr.org)

Modified Duty

HealthFirst's In House Modified Duty Program continues to help companies save money on their Workers' Comp premiums. By having injured workers attend our Modified Duty Program, employers are eliminating loss time injuries. The injured worker comes to HealthFirst each day for his work shift. The worker learns important information on safety and how to prevent injuries when returning to work. Call **562-926-3440** for more information.