

SUN PROTECTION: SKIN

May has about 40 Health Care subjects to choose from. Since summer and lots of sun is on the horizon, thought I would home in on Melanoma/skin cancer prevention.

Of prime importance is protection from the sun/s harmful rays. With longer days and warmer weather we get more exposure each day. Here are some safety tips from the American Cancer Society:

Seek shade: Avoid bright sunlight for long periods. Limit the amount of time you spend outside between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. This is when the sun can do the most damage---**SEEK SHADE** when outdoors!

Use Sunscreen: It helps protect your skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. Use a sunscreen and lip balm with a sun protection factor(SPF) of at least 15. Look for one that protects against both *ultraviolet A and B* (UVA and UVB) rays. Apply 20-30 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours of after swimming, sweating or drying off with a towel.

Wear protective clothing: They add a layer of protection from the sun. Utilize long sleeves and pants, tightly woven fabrics that you cannot see through. Wear a wide brimmed hat to shield your face, ears and neck (again tightly woven).

Shield your eyes: Sunglasses that say “Meets ANSI UV requirements” on the label block at least 99% of UV rays – wrap arounds provide the most protection. Children should also wear these types of sunglasses.

The skin is your body’s largest organ. **Check it once a month** for spots or moles that may signal skin cancer. The best time to do an exam is after a bath or shower. Check your skin in a bright room in front of a full-length mirror. Use a hand held mirror for places that are hard to see, like your thighs, back and head.

This alphabetic algorithm (**ABCDE**) may help you detect skin cancer: (contact your Dr. if these changes occur)

ASYMMETRY—the shape of half the mole does not look like the other half.

BORDER—the edges are uneven or blurry

COLOR—the color is not the same throughout. Areas of different color may occur as tan, black, pink, red, white or blue.

DIAMETER—the mole is the size of a pencil eraser or bigger.

EVOLUTION—the size, shape or color is changing.

Enjoy God’s world and the sun but don’t overdo—sunburns make you more likely to develop skin cancer.