

GOLDMAN DERMATOLOGY, PLLC

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Skin Cancer Prevention

All of us enjoy getting a little sun, whether you are an avid fan of the outdoors or just take occasional walks in the park. Every year more than one million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in U.S., making it the most common type of cancer. Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun is responsible for 90% of nonmelanoma skin cancers (basal and squamous cell carcinoma) and 65% of melanomas. Just one severe sunburn during childhood increases the risk of melanoma twofold. Tanning is produced by your skin's response to DNA damage induced by UVR, therefore there is no such thing as a "healthy tan" and, contrary to the popular belief, "base tan" does not prevent skin cancer. In addition, UVR exposure causes premature skin aging as manifested by early appearance of wrinkles, unsightly discoloration, leathery, and sagging.

As a clinical dermatologist, I spend a significant part of my day performing total body skin exams and treating skin cancer. Majority of the cases that I see could have been easily prevented. To enjoy all the benefits of the sun without putting your health at risk, please follow these simple rules:

- Avoid sun or seek the shade during peak UVR hours (10 am to 4 pm).
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF 30 or higher every day.
- Wear protective clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses. Regular fabrics offer an SPF of 5. Coolibar and Solumbra are the two companies currently on the market which make clothing and swim gear with UV protective fabrics.
- Avoid tanning booths, use a self-tanners if a "sun-kissed" look is desired
- Examine your skin head-to-toe once every month looking for skin changes of any kind. Cancer warning signs include a spot or sore that continues to itch, hurt, bleed, scab or erode for > 2 weeks. Note any new or changing moles (see ABCD rule of mole observation handout).
- See your dermatologist every year for a complete skin cancer screening exam as recommended by the American Academy of Dermatology. This is a medical service and as such, is covered by your insurance carrier. Despite all the latest medical advances, your best chance of surviving a melanoma is still by early detection and timely surgical removal.

