



Eastern Highlands Health District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EASTERN HIGHLANDS HEALTH DISTRICT ADVISES RESIDENTS TO STAY SAFE WHILE ENJOYING THE SUN

With the weather getting warmer and the days getting longer, many people are making the time to enjoy the great outdoors.

Rob Miller, Director of the Eastern Highlands Health District, comments that “spending time outside is both fun and important to our health, but diligently acting to protect your skin from over exposure to UV radiation is the most important factor in the prevention of skin cancer.” Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can result in painful sunburn. It can also lead to more serious health problems, including skin cancer, premature aging of the skin, cataracts and other eye damage, and immune system suppression. Children are particularly at risk.

Most people are not aware that skin cancer, while largely preventable, is the most common form of cancer in the United States. More than 3.5 million new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed annually. The good news is that most skin cancers are slow-growing, easy to recognize, and if detected early, highly curable. Nearly 99 percent of basal cell and squamous cell cancers can be cured when they are found early and treated promptly. For people with melanoma, the overall five-year survival rate is 88 percent. So, it’s clear that early detection is crucial.

By following some simple steps, you can still enjoy your time in the sun and protect yourself from overexposure. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends these action steps to help you and your family be “SunWise.”

- **Do NOT Burn:** Sunburns significantly increase one's lifetime risk of developing skin cancer, especially for children.
- **Avoid Sun Tanning and Tanning Beds:** UV radiation from tanning beds and the sun causes skin cancer and wrinkling.



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- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Wear protective clothing, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses, when possible.
- **Generously Apply Sunscreen:** Generously apply about one ounce of sunscreen to cover all exposed skin 15 minutes before going outside. Sunscreen should have a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 30 and provide broad-spectrum protection from both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Reapply every two hours, even on cloudy days, and after swimming or sweating.
- **Seek Shade:** Seek shade when possible, and remember that the sun's UV rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- **Use Extra Caution Near Water, Snow and Sand:** Water, snow and sand reflect the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase your chance of sunburn.
- **Check the UV Index:** The UV Index provides important information to help you plan your outdoor activities in ways that prevent sun overexposure. The UV Index forecast is issued daily by the National Weather Service and EPA.
- **Get Vitamin D Safely:** Get Vitamin D safely through a diet that includes vitamin supplements and foods fortified with Vitamin D. Don't seek the sun.

Building a lifetime of safe-sun habits is simple and there's no better time to begin now. Your skin needs protection from the sun whenever you go out and these simple steps can keep you sun-safe.

The Eastern Highlands Health District is committed to preventing illness and improving wellness in our community. For more information about Sun Safety, other health issues or other Health District information, see our website at www.ehhd.org/sun, or call our office at 860-429-3325.