

# Keeping Your Skin Healthy

By taking proper precautions, you can enjoy summer fun in the sun

> Ronald Siegle is an outdoorsy kind of guy. He golfs. He scuba dives. And when he's not at the office, the "gentleman farmer" spends his time on his 11 acres of land, gardening and taking care of his animals.

You might think that because Siegle is a dermatologist and a spokesman for the Skin Cancer Foundation that he would caution his patients and others to hide out indoors in order to avoid the sun's harmful rays and reduce their risk of skin cancer. In fact, his advice couldn't be more different. "I want people to go outside and live life, not stay in and hibernate," he says. "People should be able to do what they want to do outdoors, what makes them happy. But there is a way to do it and be safe without limiting your enjoyment."

Protecting your skin from skin cancer, which is the most common form

of cancer and accounts for nearly half of all cancers in the United States, isn't difficult. It just takes some knowledge, a little bit of planning and some simple gear.

Here are some tips:

**Suit up.** Cover your skin with protective clothing to help keep it safe

"A tan is an indication that damage has been done to the skin. There is no such thing as a healthy tan." —Dermatologist Ronald Siegle

from the sun. Make sure that fabrics are tightly woven and can't be seen through when held up to the light.

**Get the right sunscreen and use it.**

Make sure to slather sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher on any skin that's exposed to the sun. Reapply every two

hours and after swimming, toweling off or sweating. For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant, broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Make sure to use 1 ounce of sunscreen (enough to fill a shot glass) and apply it 30 minutes before going outside to all exposed

areas of your body. Don't forget to use sunscreen on hazy or overcast days, and remember to protect your ears and neck, too.

**Look cool.** Wearing sunglasses with 99 to 100 percent UV absorption rate provides optimal protection to the eyes.

**Take a lesson from Australia.**

In Australia, which has the world's highest incidence of skin cancer, public health officials recently launched a skin cancer prevention program that includes covering playgrounds and pools with tents and instituting a "No hat, No play!" rule at schools. Follow their lead by seeking shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun is at its strongest and always wearing a broad-brimmed hat outdoors.

**Know that no tan is a healthy tan.**

Many people grew up thinking that a tan is a sign of good health. It's not. "A tan is an indication that damage has been done to the skin," says Siegle. "There is no such thing as a healthy tan."

**Get your vitamin D indoors.**

Yes, the sun provides vitamin D, which



has been shown to be important for strong bones and a healthy immune system. Because the sun also exposes one to harmful ultraviolet radiation, experts suggest that you get your recommended 600 international units (or 800 international units if you are 70 or older) of vitamin D a day from food sources like oily fish, fortified dairy products and cereals, and supplements.

**Seek help.** If you notice any change on your skin, including the spread of pigmentation, change in the size and/or color of a mole, or increased itchiness or tenderness in a certain area, go see your doctor.

**Just say no to tanning beds.** People under the age of 35 who use indoor tanning machines increase

their risk of skin cancer by 75 percent, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer. The agency recently listed ultraviolet radiation-emitting tanning beds as “carcinogenic to humans”—their highest category of cancer risk. If you use indoor tanning, please stop. And don’t let the young people in your family start tanning, indoors or outside.

**Maintain your youth.** There’s a hidden bonus to taking steps to protect your skin from skin cancer: You’ll end up looking younger. “About 90 percent of the things we attribute to aging are actually due to excess sun exposure,” Siegle says. “Examine your own body



and you can see the difference between where the sun has shone and where it hasn’t,” he says. “Prudent sun protection done right definitely yields great benefits when we get older.”

**Know your stuff.** Got questions about protecting your skin and preventing skin cancer? The Skin Cancer Foundation at [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org) has lots of information, tips and true stories that will help provide answers.

For more information, visit [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org) •

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