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## Skin Cancer: Detect It Early

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, the three most common forms of skin cancer include:

- ◆ *Basal cell carcinoma*—the most common skin cancer. It appears as a pearly bump that sometimes won't heal. It can also look like a sore that won't heal.
  - ◆ *Squamous cell carcinoma*—the second-most common skin cancer. It appears as a crusty, scaly patch with a hard surface.
  - ◆ *Melanoma*—the least common type of skin cancer, but most dangerous. People can die from melanoma. If you have a family history of this skin cancer, you could get it even if you've never been out in the sun. It's usually a dark mole, sometimes with an uneven edge. The color and size may change over time.
- You need to be especially careful to check your skin if you:
- have light hair and skin • freckle and burn easily • have a family history of skin cancer • spent a lot of time in the sun during your life • had blistering sunburns as a child • have blue, green or gray eyes.

*Note:* Having a checkup by a dermatologist could be a lifesaver.

For more information on skin cancer, visit the American Academy of Dermatology at <http://www.aad.org/professionals/SkinCancerScreenings/>.

## Protect Against Sun Exposure

**H**ave you ever been cooked like a lobster? Lobsters turn bright red as they cook and so do people when they're exposed to the burning rays of the sun for prolonged time periods. Protecting your skin from prolonged sun exposure is vital.

According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), unprotected exposure to UV rays can cause prematurely aged skin, wrinkles, freckles, loss of elasticity in the skin, dark patches, rough or scaly spots, and skin cancers. Besides these conditions, the sun's UV radiation can also increase the risk of cataracts and certain other eye problems, and can suppress the immune system in some people.

**To protect your skin against the sun, consider these tips from the ACS:**

- Avoid prolonged sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Look for shade, especially in the middle of the day when the sun's rays are strongest. Practice the shadow rule. If your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are at their strongest.
- Wear protective clothing to guard as much skin as possible when you're outside in the sun. Choose comfortable clothes made of tightly woven fabrics

that you can't see through when held up to a light.

- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Apply a generous amount (about a palmful) of sunscreen and reapply it after swimming, toweling dry, or perspiring.

Use sunscreen even on hazy or overcast days.

- Cover your head with a wide-brimmed hat, shading your face, ears, and neck. If you choose a baseball cap, remember to protect your ears and neck with sunscreen.

- Wear sunglasses with 99 percent to 100 percent UV absorption to provide optimal protection for the eyes and the surrounding skin.

- Follow these practices to protect your skin even on cloudy or overcast days. UV rays travel through clouds. Use extra caution near water, snow and sand as they reflect the damaging rays of the sun which can increase your chance of sunburn.

- Pay attention to the daily UV index. The higher the number, the greater the exposure to UV radiation.

For more information, visit the American Cancer Society at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or the American Academy of Dermatology at [www.aad.org/public/Publications/pamphlets/SunandSkin.htm](http://www.aad.org/public/Publications/pamphlets/SunandSkin.htm).

