



HEALTH AWARENESS

July 2023

UV Safety Awareness Month

Sun safety is never out of season in Colorado, where sunny days and high altitude increase exposure to the sun's harmful rays. Excessive exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer and premature aging of the skin. Harmful rays from the sun -- and sunlamps and tanning beds -- may also cause eye problems, weaken your immune system, and give you unsightly skin spots and wrinkles, or "leathery" skin.

While sunshine is essential for your body to process vitamin D, ultraviolet (UV) radiation can quickly damage your skin, no matter your skin tone. Sun damage to the body is caused by invisible UV radiation, which reaches us as long UVA wavelengths and short UVB wavelengths. UVB radiation can cause sunburn. But the longer wavelength UVA is dangerous, too, as it can penetrate the skin and damage tissue at deeper levels. If you have an illness and take medications, ask your doctor about extra sun care precautions because some drugs may increase sensitivity to the sun.

REDUCE TIME IN THE SUN

Stay in the shade as much as possible throughout the day. The sun's rays are strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., so limit exposure during this window. In addition, be mindful that clouds offer little protection, and UV rays can bounce off surfaces like water, sand, snow or pavement, leading to increased exposure. When outside, use broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 and reapply every two hours. Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's UV rays in as little as 15 minutes.

PROTECT YOUR EYES

UV radiation also can burn your eyes, which is a painful and gritty feeling. Too much UV light can damage the retina, lens, and cornea. Sun damage to the lens can lead to clouding or [cataracts](#). Exposure to UV light also can increase your risk of developing [ocular melanoma](#). Long hours on the beach or in the snow without adequate eye protection also can result in

a short-term condition known as photokeratitis, or reversible sunburn of the cornea. This painful condition — also known as "snow blindness" — can cause temporary vision loss.

[Learn more](#) about choosing the best sunglasses.

- When buying sunglasses, look for a label that specifically offers 100% UV protection. This assures that the glasses block both UVA and UVB radiation.
- Eyewear should be labeled "sunglasses." Be wary of dark or tinted eyewear sold as fashion accessories that may provide little or no protection.
- Don't assume that pricier sunglasses or those with a darker tint offer more UV protection.
- Be sure that your sunglasses don't distort colors and affect the recognition of traffic signals.
- Ask an eye care professional to test your sunglasses if you're not sure of their level of UV protection.



CHECK FOR SKIN CANCER

Overexposure to UV rays causes most cases of melanoma, the deadliest kind of skin cancer. To lower your skin cancer risk, protect your skin from the sun and avoid indoor tanning. Check your skin regularly for signs of skin cancer. Look for changes in the size, shape, color, or feel of birthmarks, moles, and spots. If you find any changes, see your doctor. Coloradans get skin cancer at a higher rate than the national average.

Anyone can get skin cancer, but people with [certain characteristics](#) are at greater risk.

- A lighter natural skin color.
- Skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily, or becomes painful in the sun.
- Blue or green eyes.
- Blond or red hair.
- Certain types and a large number of moles.
- A family history of skin cancer.
- Older age.

DRESS WITH CARE

Sunscreens don't provide complete protection from UV rays. You should protect your skin with dark, tightly woven clothing that covers your arms and legs, and a broad-brimmed hat that provides more protection than a baseball cap or visor. Sun-protective clothing with built-in SPF is available, however, the FDA does not regulate such products unless the manufacturer intends to make a medical claim, so consider using other precautions such as an umbrella for shade or sunscreen.

1 in 5

1 in 5 Americans
get skin cancer.



UV light exposure
causes most skin cancers.



Skin cancer is the **most common type of cancer** in the United States.



Just **five sunburns doubles your risk of developing melanoma**, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

BENEFITS CORNER

College and Health Coverage

To help prevent germs from spreading quickly in classrooms or communal living spaces, many colleges and technical schools require incoming students to be up to date on certain vaccinations. If you have a dependent child off to college, make sure they are current with their vaccinations and immunizations which falls under preventive services.

Getting vaccinated is a safe and effective way to help your child stay healthy. The County Health Pool covers vaccinations and immunizations recommended by the CDC and are covered at 100% under preventive services.

Example Immunizations:

Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (whooping cough)
Haemophilus Influenza Type B (Hib)
Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B
Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
Influenza (flu)
Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)
Meningococcal (meningitis)
Pneumococcal (pneumonia)
Polio
Rotavirus
Varicella (chicken pox)

