



Catholic Healthcare West

Ask the Expert
Arizona Republic

Q: What level of SPF protection should I be using to protect myself from the sun?

A: According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), sun exposure causes more than one million non-melanoma skin cancers each year. Since we live in Arizona where we have the second highest rate of skin cancer in the world, it is important to protect our skin from the sun every day.

You should always apply a broad spectrum sunscreen, which protects against both ultraviolet A and B rays, with a sun protection factor of 30 or higher at least 30 minutes prior to going outside. Be sure to apply sunscreen on both sunny and cloudy days, and reapply every 90 minutes especially after swimming and sweating. An adult should apply approximately one ounce of sunscreen, enough to fill a shot glass, to adequately cover exposed skin.

In addition to wearing sunscreen, the ACS offers the following tips to protect you from the sun:

- Wear protective clothing such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses when possible.
- Seek shade as much as possible and avoid being in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun is the strongest.

It's also important to examine your skin for any abnormal moles using the ABCDEs (asymmetry, border, color, diameter and evolving) to identify melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

- Asymmetry is when one half of a mole does not look like the other.
- Borders of moles should be smooth, not scalloped or irregular.
- The color of moles should be uniform. Look for anything black on the skin.
- The diameter of a mole should be less than six millimeters, approximately the size of a pencil eraser.
- If your moles are evolving or changing, have them checked immediately.

Contact your doctor if you notice any changes in the color or size of a mole or have any non-healing or bleeding sores on your skin. To learn more about skin cancer, log on to www.cancer.org.



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