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You Can Prevent Skin Cancer And Wrinkles

Did you know that almost all skin cancers, melanoma included, and skin wrinkling are due to ultraviolet light exposure? That's right, the wrinkles you see around your eyes aren't from squinting. They are from basking by the pool or being outside without a hat or sunscreen.

Research recently completed here at the Skin Cancer Center, and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Dermatology, confirms that there is an epidemic of skin cancer in the United States. Based on 2012 data, 5.4 million new cases involving 3 million individuals were reported. If you are Caucasian, you have at least a 35 percent chance of developing skin cancer at some point in your life.

I sat in the front row of the U.S. Surgeon General's call-to-action on the hazards of tanning last year. Tanning causes a huge amount of unnecessary death, pain and suffering in the U.S., costing many billions of dollars. Tanning is the new tobacco.

Tanning beds are also a problem. They are a no-go. Using tanning beds before age 30 increases the lifetime risk of melanoma by 59 percent, and will lead to rough, leathery, wrinkled skin. There is no "safe" tanning dose. If a tan is a must, get a spray tan!

The good news, however, is that almost all skin cancer and wrinkling can be avoided by staying away from ultraviolet radiation. Much of this is common sense:

- If you know you are going to be outside all day, put on your factor 30 sunscreen in the morning before you get dressed.
- Avoid direct sun exposure during the peak hours of the day when your shadow is shorter than you are tall (10 a.m.-4 p.m.).

- Wear a hat (best with a 4-inch brim) and a cover-up when at the pool, beach or running.

- When out in the sun, seek shade if possible—be the one under the umbrella.

- Always reapply sunscreen when you get out of the water; none of it is really waterproof.

- Always keep a bottle of sunscreen in the car in case you get caught outside unexpectedly.

It is not too late to start reaping the benefits of sun protection. Your skin can repair itself, but the effect is cumulative over time. There is evidence, however, that the sun damage you get when older may trigger skin cancer development since your skin can't repair itself as well.

If you develop a suspicious growth, a sore that bleeds and won't heal, a rough red spot that gets bigger and doesn't clear up in two or three weeks, or a mole that is growing rapidly, get them checked out by a dermatologist. Have someone "watch your back" for suspicious growths. The majority of the time these growths are not skin cancer, and you will be reassured. If it is a skin cancer, remember they are all curable when caught early!

And by the way, you can get all the Vitamin D you'll ever need from a little bottle



at your local pharmacy or grocery store. Now go out and have fun, but play it safe! ■

Dr. Brett Coldiron is one of the most distinguished Mohs surgeons in the world. He and his team of board-certified physicians at the Skin Cancer Center in Cincinnati have treated and cured over 50,000 skin cancers since 1992. The Skin Cancer Center is the only Joint Commission accredited Mohs Micrographic Surgery facility in Ohio. Visit the team at www.skincancercenter.net.