

Summer Sun Safety

Summer is here and our families are off to the pool, the beach or outdoor to have fun. Despite the general advice applying sunscreen is one of the last things teenagers are considering as they head out doors. 50 % to 80 % of sun damage to our skin occurs during childhood and adolescence. Intermittent but intense sun exposure contributes to increased risk of skin cancer later in life. Every sunburn counts so it is never too early to improve sun safety. Health problems related to sun includes skin cancer, premature aging with thick and wrinkled skin and cataracts as well from lack of proper eye protection.

Common types of skin cancer include Melanoma, Squamous cell and basal cell carcinoma. Melanoma is the most serious and life-threatening form. Early detection renders cure rate of over 95 % in most cases.

Using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 until age 18 can reduce the development of skin cancer by 78%. Family history is contributory but sun exposure is one of the most important factors associated with skin cancer. Teenagers know the dangers of sun exposure but they still fail to translate this to sun safe behaviors. They may apply sunscreens while going to the beach but not so on a regular basis while enjoying other out door activities. Less than 30 % reapply sunscreen after swimming. Also sunscreen should be used at other times of the year and not only the summer months.

General tips:

- Limit sun exposure during the time when the sun's UV rays are the strongest 10 AM to 4 PM.

- Apply sun screen prior to being in the sun- preferably 30 minutes before.

- Reapply after swimming, toweling off, sweating. Even waterproof sunscreen wears off.

- Remember the lips with an SPF of 15.

- Wear sunglasses and wide brimmed hat

- When possible stay in the shade

- As a parent be a good role model for your kids. By doing this you are protecting your skin and your teenagers!