SCOUTS SUN SAFETY PATCH ARTICLES

Juniors Cadettes (Grades 4-8)

Have you ever heard of a dermatologist? A dermatologist is a skin doctor. A dermatologist treats skin issues like acne and diseases including skin cancer. You may be thinking that you are just a kid and that your skin looks pretty good right now. This is true! Most people your age don't need to worry about having skin problems or skin cancer, but what if you were told that practicing healthy skin habits right now can keep your skin safe and always looking its best?

Have you ever looked at certain people (who weren't so old) and thought that they looked really, really old? Maybe they had HUGE wrinkles or skin that looked like leather. Do you know why these people looked so old? It could be that they spent a lot of time in the sun without practicing sun safety when they were young. Perhaps they didn't use sunscreen, sunglasses or hats to protect their skin, eyes and scalps. Not only does the sun cause wrinkles, it can cause skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most prevalent cancer in America. There are two general types of skin cancer: melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) (i.e. basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma.) Skin cancer is an uncontrolled growth and spread of cells or lesions in the epidermis (the outer layer of skin). Excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or other sources, like tanning beds, is the greatest risk factor for developing skin cancer.

Using tanning beds when you are a teenager, or in your 20s, can increase your risk of developing melanoma by up to 75%. Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer because it can spread beneath your skin and throughout your body. People can die of melanoma, so you want to do all that you can to protect yourself and prevent it.

Being sun safe is easy! You just need to remember this: Protect Your Skin. Protect Yourself. Protect Your Life. Here are some simple steps to being sun safe:

<u>Sunscreen</u>: You should wear sunscreen whenever you are outdoors, whether you are playing, swimming, biking or even attending outdoor events. People can get sunburns on cloudy days, so sunscreen is always important.

Here are three things to remember about sunscreen:

1.   Use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30.
2.   Apply it 20 minutes before going outside so that it can absorb into your skin. Make sure that your sunscreen hasn't expired.
3.   Reapply every 80 minutes to two hours. It's important to put sunscreen on throughout the day if you are outdoors for a long time or if you are swimming or sweating.

    Note: Some people are allergic to sunscreens or may prefer to use natural sunscreens that contain zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Natural sunscreens sit on the surface of the skin and reflect UV radiation.

Ultraviolet (UV) rays: The sun is the most powerful from 10AM to 2PM. This is when the sun's UV rays are the highest and can lead to a sunburn. During these hours, you should pay special attention and take cover to protect your skin---even your scalp because the sun can penetrate through your hair. The sun reflects water and snow, making UV rays even stronger. So, be aware. Stay in the shade or wear sunscreen, a hat, long-sleeve shirt, and sunglasses. It's that easy!

As a Scout, you learn how to respect and take care of yourself. This also means taking care of your skin. We all have a job to help make the world a better place. You can achieve this by protecting yourself and also by teaching others to be sun safe!

Learn more about sun safety and skin cancer prevention at:
www.outrunthesun.org

Note to leaders or parents: Some people may be allergic to sunscreen or prefer using natural sunscreens. There are sunscreens available that are mineral based, which may cause fewer allergic reactions. These products sit on the surface of the skin and reflect UV radiation. Please see a dermatologist for specific information. It is still easy to protect skin by wearing sun-protective clothing and spending time in the shade.