

## SCOUTS SUN SAFETY PATCH ARTICLES

### Seniors/Ambassadors (Grades 9-12)

As a Scout, you learn how to respect and take care of yourself. You also have a responsibility to make the world a better place. Did you know you can achieve both goals by practicing sun safety? It's true. You can respect your own skin by protecting it from over exposure to harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. You can also teach others to protect themselves from skin cancer.

The average person has 20 square feet of skin on his/ her body. Your skin is your largest organ and it protects you from microbes, helps to regulate your body temperature and allows for the sensations of touch, heat and cold. Having healthy skin is a big deal, and being healthy starts now.

Did you know that one bad sunburn as a child can raise your chances of developing skin cancer by 50%? Skin cancer is the most prevalent cancer in America. There are two general types of skin cancer: melanoma and nonmelanoma 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. Overall, skin cancers affect more people than lung, breast, colon and prostate cancers combined.

People often think that a tan makes them look healthy. Unfortunately, UV radiation from the sun or indoor tanning beds damages healthy skin. Tanning beds can significantly increase your risk of developing skin cancer, especially melanoma, which is the most deadly form of skin cancer. In fact, some experts say that tanning beds can increase your risk for melanoma by up to 75%.

Melanoma is the second most common type of cancer in people ages 15 to 25. It is important to protect your skin whenever you are outdoors. Keep in mind that you can even get a sunburn when it's cloudy. So, don't forget your sunscreen!

Here are five things to remember about sunscreen:

1. Use a sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 30. Make sure that it is a broad spectrum sunscreen that protects against both UVA and UVB rays because they affect your skin differently.

2. Apply sunscreen twenty minutes before going outside so that it can absorb into your skin.
3. Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours. Sunscreen doesn't last all day long. Reapply!
4. Check the expiration date to make sure it isn't expired.
5. The average size person needs to use about one ounce of sunscreen. This may seem like a lot but you need to cover all exposed areas of your skin.

Other ways to protect your skin include wearing sun protective clothing (long sleeves, hats, sunglasses, long pants.) Some clothing has a UPF factor built into the fabric, which helps to protect your skin. You can always seek shade too!

### The Role of the UV Index:

The UV Index is a rating scale that measures the harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun, so that you can be prepared when you go outdoors. You can find the daily UV index for your local area at [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com).

UV Index Number	Exposure Level	Precautions
0-2	Low	Wear sunscreen and sunglasses
3 to 5	Moderate	Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, cover up, seek shade near midday hours.
6 to 7	High	Wear sunscreen and protective eyewear and clothing. Reduce time in sun between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
8 to 10	Very High	Wear sunscreen and protective eyewear and clothing. Take extra precautions. Unprotected skin will be damaged and can burn quickly. Reduce time in sun between 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
11+	Extreme	Extreme high risk of harm. Take all precautions. Unprotected skin can burn in minutes. If possible stay inside.

### Who Gets Skin Cancer?

Everyone one is susceptible to getting skin cancer. However, some people are more prone to developing the disease.

- **Fair to light-skinned complexion.** There is a greater chance of getting melanoma if you have a light or fair complexion. Freckles are an indicator of sun sensitivity and sun damage.

- **Hair and eye color.** People with natural blonde or red hair and people with blue or green eyes are more susceptible to a higher risk of developing melanoma.
- **Multiple or atypical nevi (moles).** People who have a large number of moles (more than 50) often have a higher risk of developing melanoma.
- **Family history.** The risk for developing melanoma is greater for someone who has had one or more close relatives diagnosed with the disease.
- **Excessive exposure to UV radiation from the sun and tanning beds.** The US Department of Health and Human Services and the International Agency of Research on Cancer panel has found that exposure to sunlamps or sunbeds is *known to be a human carcinogen* based on sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity from studies in humans.
- **History of sunburn.** Sunburn at an early age can increase a person's risk for developing melanoma and other skin cancers as they age.
- **Diseases that suppress the immune system.** People who have a weakened immune system, or who are being treated with immune-suppressing medicines, have an increased risk for melanoma.
- **Those with history of basal cell or squamous cell skin cancers.** (These are the non-melanoma types of skin cancer.)
- **Occupational exposure to coal tar, pitch, creosote, arsenic compounds, radium or some pesticides.**

### How do you recognize possible signs of melanoma?

Know your skin: It is important to note any changes to your skin. Do you have any moles that are changing or growing? Do you have any new moles? Use the following 'ABCDEs' of melanoma as a general guide when performing monthly self-skin exams. Also, it is recommended that people see a dermatologist for an annual full-body exam.

**A: Asymmetry.** If you were to divide the mole in half vertically would it be the same on both sides? What if you divide it in half horizontally, or diagonally? You want your moles to be the same no matter which way you divide them in half.

**B: Border.** What does the border of your mole look like? Is it smooth? Is it irregular, blurred or poorly defined? The border of your moles should be smooth, well defined and even.

**C: Color.** Moles can come in a variety of different colors: black, white, red, brown and even blue. What you're looking for here is that your mole is the same color throughout. You want to make sure your mole does not have different shades of the same color or completely different colors from one area to the next.

**D: Diameter.** How big is your mole? Melanoma can be in any sized mole but most healthy moles do not exceed the size of a pencil eraser, about ¼ of an inch, 6 millimeters. If your mole is bigger it should be examined by a dermatologist.

**E: Evolving.** Has your mole been changing over time? The best tip here is to take a picture of it every month so you can compare each time you do a self-exam. You are looking for any difference here—color, shape or size.

If you find a mole that does not pass one or more of the ABCDEs of melanoma see a dermatologist. Also see a dermatologist if you have a mole that itches or bleeds or if you find a nodule under your skin.

You can easily protect your skin from UV rays that can turn healthy skin into damaged skin or, even worse, lead to skin cancer. Please practice sun safety and share your new knowledge to help make your family and community more aware about ways to be sun safe.

**Learn more about sun safety and skin cancer prevention at:**

[www.outrunthesun.org](http://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.*