

Q & A about Sun and Sun Protection

Summer in Michiana means swimming, gardening, picnics, baseball games, and other outdoor activities. Of course, more time outdoors means more sun exposure. Although most of the population is aware that there is a correlation between sun exposure and skin cancer, there are still many misunderstandings about who benefits from sun protection.

Q: I tan easily, so I don't need to worry about skin cancer or wearing sunscreen, right?

A: Although individuals with fair complexions are at a higher risk for skin cancer, people of all skin types can develop skin cancer. Tanning is a protective response to ultraviolet radiation. This means by the time you notice a tan, there has already been damage to your skin. Cosmetically, tanning also speeds the aging process and can make certain types of age spots, melasma, and darkening of the skin after inflammation (called postinflammatory hyperpigmentation) more prominent.

Q: I already have a lot of sun damage from when I was younger –isn't it too late for me to worry about using sunscreen now?

A: It's never too late to incorporate photoprotection into your routine! In fact, one study showed that use of sunscreen in individuals already diagnosed with precancerous lesions decreased the number of new lesions that formed.

Q: There are so many options—how do I know I have the right kind of sunscreen?

A: To get protection from both UVA and UVB rays, look for at least 1 of the following ingredients: Titanium Dioxide, Zinc Oxide, Parsol 1789 (Avobenzone), or Mexoryl (anthelios). Titanium Dioxide and Zinc Oxide are physical blockers that protect the skin by reflecting light and are excellent for people with sun sensitivity, melasma, or sensitive skin. They are now available in micronized form to go on clear. Many sunscreens with these ingredients have key words in the title such as “sensitive skin,” “natural,” or “chemical-free.” Several baby sunscreens use these as active ingredients as well. Make sure to apply about 30 minutes before your activity and reapply at least every 2 hours while you are outdoors.

Sunscreens now come in lotions, creams, gels, sprays and powder formulations. There are even types for dry, sensitive or acne prone skin, so everyone can find the perfect product to keep their skin healthy as they enjoy these beautiful summer days!