



Everyone enjoys this time of year. But those rays of sun can be dangerous. Too much sun exposure can cause skin cancer. Melanoma is a dangerous form of skin cancer. Almost 400 new cases of melanoma are diagnosed in New Hampshire residents each year.

Here are some things you can do to prevent Melanoma.

- ☀ Don't allow your skin to burn. Sunburn is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer. Even in shade your skin can burn, particularly if the sun reflects off of water, snow, sand or concrete.
- ☀ The midday hours are the time when the sun's ultraviolet rays are the strongest, so seek shade during those hours.
- ☀ Protect your skin with sunscreen. Wear sunscreen with a minimum of Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 15 or higher. It is important to reapply sunscreen every two hours and after swimming or activities that make you sweat. (Check the expiration date on the sunscreen. For those lotions without dates, there is a shelf life of not more than three years and less if it has been exposed to high temperatures.)
- ☀ Wear loose, protective clothing. Wet clothes offer less UV protection than dry clothes and darker colors may provide more protection than lighter colors. Don't forget to cover your head and protect your ears and neck. Avoid straw hats that let light in and use ones made of tightly woven fabric such as canvas.
- ☀ Protect your eyes with sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays. Sunglasses can help you avoid cataracts and sun damage to the skin around your eyes. Wraparound glasses are the best because they let in less sunlight.
- ☀ Many prescription drugs can make people more susceptible to the damaging rays of the sun. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist about this issue.
- ☀ Avoid the use of tanning beds and sunlamps. The type and amount of UV radiation emitted from some tanning beds appear to be similar to that of noontime summer sun, and in some cases, the amount is even higher than the sun would emit. Artificial UV radiation can substantially damage the skin (i.e., cause sunburn) and has been linked to melanoma of the eye. The World Health Organization recommends that no person under the age of 18 years use tanning beds because of the associated increased risk for skin cancer. Use of tanning devices before the age of 30 increases the risk of melanoma by 75%.
- ☀ If you think you need a lot of sunlight exposure to get enough vitamin D, you don't. You can also get your vitamin D safely through a diet that includes foods fortified with vitamin D.

For more information on safety in the sun: www.sunsafetyalliance.org/.

The **UV Index**, developed by the National Weather Service and EPA, indicates the strength of solar UV radiation on a scale from 1 (low) to 11+ (extremely high). You can use the UV Index to take appropriate sun-protective behaviors and avoid overexposure to UV radiation.

To find out what the UV index is on any given day check out: <http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html>, enter the zip code where you are located and you'll be able to find what the UV index is there along with some specific sun protection messages.

For more information about sun safety and skin cancer, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/.