

## *Skin Cancer Myths and Facts*

**Myth:** Skin Cancer is not a deadly disease.

**Fact:** Though the skin cancer death rates are lower than many other forms of cancer, more than 10,000 people lose their lives from skin cancer every year in the United States. Most deaths are due to melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer.

**Myth:** Skin cancer only affects Caucasian men and women and those with lighter skin.

**Fact:** Everyone is at risk for skin cancer, though cases are most prevalent in those with lighter skin. According to the National Cancer Institute, approximately 7 percent of all skin cancer cases occur in patients of Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American, or Native American descent.

**Myth:** Tanning salons are a safe alternative to sun tanning without the risk of skin cancer.

**Fact:** A tanning bed produces ultraviolet rays just like the sun. At times, a tanning bed can be more dangerous because its rays are not being filtered by the ozone layer.

**Myth:** Skin cancer is diagnosed only in people who have considerable exposure to the sun's rays.

**Fact:** Skin cancer can affect anyone, regardless of sun exposure, though it is more prevalent among those who have significant contact with the sun's rays. It is important to apply sunscreen anytime you are outside.

**Myth:** If the sun is not out or it is cold, there is no risk from the sun's damaging rays.

**Fact:** The sun constantly produces ultraviolet rays which penetrate clouds and affect your skin even during cold weather. Also, in higher elevations, the air is thinner, making the sun more powerful because there is less atmosphere to filter the rays. The rays are most intense during midday hours (10:00 a.m. – 4 p.m.) when the sun is at its highest in the sky.

**Myth:** You only need to apply sunscreen once a day for proper protection.

**Fact:** Sunscreen works for a limited time. You should reapply sunscreen every two hours or according to the product label. Sunscreen should always be reapplied after swimming or participating in any activity that causes perspiration.

**Myth:** All sunscreens and tanning oils provide proper protection from the sun.

**Fact:** Experts recommend the use of sunscreens with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. In addition to sunscreen, the use of hats, sunglasses, and other clothing is encouraged to cover up any additional body areas that could be exposed to the sun's unhealthy rays.

*Sources: American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and American Academy of Dermatology*



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