

## July: Is the Sun a Friend or a Foe?



### The effects of ultraviolet (UV) rays

It is that time of year again for warm temperatures and basking in the sun. Hanging out at the pool or the beach and get that million dollar tan! The sun can be our friend as it gives that much needed Vitamin D and the opportunity to do many fun things during the long days of the summertime. However, too much exposure to the sun will damage your skin which you do not want!

Sunlight is the main source of UV rays, which can damage the DNA of your skin cells. Tanning lamps and beds are also sources of UV rays. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun and tanning beds is classified as a human carcinogen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization. A carcinogen is defined as any substance or radiation that is an agent directly involved in causing cancer. People who get lots of exposure to light from UV sources are at greater risk of skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Each year, more new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the U.S. than cases of breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined. One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.

The amount of UV exposure a person gets depends on the strength of the rays, the length of time the skin is exposed and whether the skin is protected with clothing or sunscreen. You do not have to avoid sunlight completely, but limiting the exposure to UV rays is important to good health.

Here are a few simple steps to limit exposure to UV rays:

- Put sunscreen on daily. People only think about sun protection when they are spending the day at the beach, lake, or pool. But daily sun exposure adds up because it happens every time you are in the sun.
- Staying in the shade is one of the best ways to avoid over-exposure to the sun.
- Put on a hat with a 2 or 3 inch brim. It protects areas such as the ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- Wear sunglasses to protect the eyes and sensitive skin around them.
- Wearing clothing to protect as much of the skin as possible.



We only get one chance with our skin, so why not take the extra precautions and keep it looking its best as long as possible?

The alternative to protecting your skin would be to turn yourself into a prune through overexposure from UV rays, which may cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars on corrective measures.

The sun, like anything else needs to be kept in balance.

It is here for our benefit and enjoyment, but can be very damaging if not balanced.

