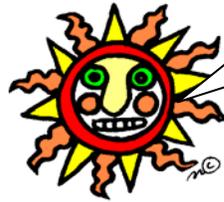


SunSafe in the Middle School Years

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Have fun
outside *and* be
Sunsafer

You might not realize that our outdoor life style and summer sun exposure in northern New England put us at increased risk for skin cancer.

- Skin cancer rates in New Hampshire have tripled in the past twenty years.
- VT has one of the nation's highest mortality from melanoma.
- 90% of skin cancer can be attributed to sun exposure, and we get about 80% of our total lifetime sun exposure by the time we are 18.
- One blistering sunburn during childhood *doubles* the risk of skin cancer later in life.

Promoting solar protection is an essential but often unnoticed part of encouraging healthy behaviors in young people.

A child's skin is more sensitive than is an adult's to sunlight exposure. It can take less than 10 minutes for a child's skin to burn, so children should not go out into the sun without protection. In New England, we forget that the sun can burn us even on cooler spring and fall days - sun intensity greatly increases in May, and continues to be a threat through September.

Middle school is a time of transition when young people begin making their own health decisions--high school teen health behaviors are harder to change. Parents are important role models and information sources for their middle school children. Remember, children learn from what you do as well as what you say. Show them how you protect yourself from the sun. By adopting sun safe behavior, you will reduce your risk and your child's risk of developing skin cancer!

We recommend that you and your children:

- Apply sunscreen of SPF 15 (or higher) 30 minutes before you go outdoors. Always buy sunscreen with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 15. The sunscreen you use should say it protects from both UVA and UVB rays (broad spectrum).
- Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours and more often if you have been in the water or sweating.
- Keep an extra bottle of sunscreen in your car or sport bag.
- Wear a hat and protective clothing when outdoors. Hats should protect ears and necks as well as faces. Tightly woven fabrics block UV rays best.
- Wear sunglasses -- pick a pair that block all UV rays.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, especially between 11 am and 3 pm. Large umbrellas are a great way to create shade.
- Encourage schools and recreation programs to plan for shade on playing fields.

Especially for adults:

- Do not use tanning booths or other artificial lights for tanning.
- *Examine your skin regularly.* If you notice new, different, or peculiar moles on your skin, contact a physician IMMEDIATELY.