

Your Health Matters

SLIP! SLOP! SLAP! WRAP!

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer. It kills more than 7,000 Americans each year and often strikes people who suffer sunburns, especially during childhood. Here are some facts about melanoma.

- 75% of all skin cancers deaths are melanoma.
- Every 7 minutes someone in the United States will be diagnosed with melanoma.
- 1 in 50 Americans will develop melanoma in their lifetime.
- Every hour someone will die from melanoma.
- Melanoma is the second most common cancer among men and women.

Melanoma can be deadly. When the sun blazes down during Missouri's hot summer months, some days you can almost feel your skin burning. But even if you can't see or feel a sunburn, the sun can still cause damage to your skin.

To help you remember some of the basic sun safety tips, the American Cancer Society had adopted this simple message created in Australia: Slip! Slop! Slap! Wrap!

Slip on a Shirt:

Cover up with protective clothing to guard as much as possible when you are out in the sun. Think "light layers".

Slop on Sunscreen:

Use sunscreen and lip balm with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Apply a generous amount of sunscreen (about a palmful) 20 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours and after swimming, toweling dry, or seating. Use sunscreen even on hazy or cloudy days.

Slap on a Hat:

Cover your head with a wide brimmed hat, shading your face, ears, and neck. If you choose a baseball cap, remember to protect your ears and neck with sunscreen.

Wrap on Sunglasses:

Wear sunglasses rated for 99% to 100% UV absorption to provide optimal protection for the eyes and surrounding skin.

Never let your child get sunburned! Kids should wear sunscreen even when it is cloudy outside. Apply it at least 30 minutes before they go outside and reapply it every two hours or after they go swimming. Using sunscreen regularly can reduce their risk of skin cancer by almost 78%.

Babies under six months old should be kept out of direct sunlight. They have thinner skin and burn more quickly than older children and adults do. When infants travel outside they should be dressed in lightweight clothing that covers their arms and legs. They should be wearing a brimmed hat and should be kept in the shade.

So, remember when you are out in the sun, don't forget to Slip! Slop! Slap! And Wrap!

To learn more about sun safety, visit www.montgomerycountyhealth.org Facebook or Twitter, or call 573-564-2495. The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. ■

Linda Hasman

