

Dermatology Consultants at Newton-Wellesley, PC

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Tips for Sun Protection

Seek shade and minimize direct sun exposure, especially during the summer months between 10:00am and 4:00pm.

Protect the scalp, face, ears and neck by wearing a wide brimmed hat. Scalp protection is especially important for those with thinning hair, and a hat can be a quick and easy way to protect the scalp.

Wear sun protective clothing with long sleeves and long pants. Any dry fabric will provide reasonably good protection. For extra protection in some cases consider dense weave sun protective clothing.

Use a sunscreen to all sun exposed skin daily. Look for a sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher, and that blocks both UVB and UVA. Many facial moisturizers have sunblock and are a convenient way to protect the face. There are many high-quality sunscreens available; the most important thing is to find one that you like and will use.

Avoid tanning and do not use indoor tanning equipment. Do not try to prevent burning on a sunny vacation by tanning beforehand – the only way to avoid skin cancer-causing damage is to avoid both tanning and burning.

Keep newborns protected from direct sun. Sunscreens should only be used on children over the age of six months. Sun protection and sunscreens are particularly important for children in order to minimize future skin cancer risk.

Vitamin D Supplementation: Deliberate sun exposure to generate vitamin D is not recommended. Research has also shown that even with careful use of sunscreen, the skin is exposed to enough sunlight to generate vitamin D. If you are concerned about vitamin D levels, or if directed by your physician for measured low levels, you could consider a vitamin supplement pill, although recent large trials have demonstrated no significant benefit to these supplements in the general population.

Does past sun damage mean it's too late for sun protection now? No! It is true that much of the damage that causes skin cancer occurs throughout life including childhood. However, sun protection helps minimize skin cancer and precancers in adults too. The reason for this is that ultraviolet light suppresses the skin's immunity and allows precancers and cancers to develop more easily. Sun protection enhances skin immunity and fights skin cancers and precancers.

For more information go to: www.skincancer.org or www.AAD.org