

# Summer Sun Safety

Sponsored by Madelyn Besse, PA  
Strong Area Health Center

When you head to the pool, beach, or just out to your backyard sprinkler for some summer fun, it is time to think about protecting yourself from the sun. Exposure to the ultraviolet light produced by the sun can cause sunburn, premature aging and skin cancer. Here are some facts and tips about the sun and sunscreen to keep you from feeling the burn.

## How to reduce skin cancer risk:

- Wear brimmed hats, long sleeved shirts, and other items that cover up your skin and protect you from the sun.
- Use sunscreen 30 minutes before you go outside and reapply every two hours.
- Stay in the shade when the sun is strongest, between 10AM and 4PM.
- Check your skin every month for:
  - Growths that increase in size
  - Moles, birthmarks, or brown spots that change in color, size or texture, have an irregular outline, or are bigger than ¼ inch.
  - Spots or sores that hurt, itch, crust, scab, or bleed and do not heal for three weeks.
- Contact your medical provider if you have questions.



## Sunscreen and children:

- Apply sunscreen on children and babies over the age of six months. Keep newborns out of the sun and covered up.

## Sunscreen and its SPF number:

The chemicals in sunscreen scatter or absorb the sun's rays before they reach your skin just like a shield keeps arrows from hitting a person. SPF (sun protection factor) tells you the effectiveness of the shield: the higher the SPF number, the stronger the shield and the more arrows, or sun rays, it will take to penetrate the shield and burn your skin.

Sunscreen lasts longer in the morning or evening than at noon when the sun is more intense and more 'arrows' are hitting the shield. Use SPF 15 or higher, and reapply every 30 minutes because your sunscreen weakens while under attack from the sun!

Thanks for Dani O'Rourke-Suchoff, AmeriCorps Member for article development.

For more information go to:

[Http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/CDER/ucm106351.htm](http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/CDER/ucm106351.htm)

[Http://www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org)

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Belgrade Regional Health Center – Belgrade  
Lovejoy Health Center – Albion  
Madison Area Health Center – Madison  
Mt. Abram Regional Health Center – Kingfield  
Richmond Area Health Center – Richmond  
Rangeley Family Medicine – Rangeley  
Strong Area Health & Dental Center – Strong  
Sheepscot Valley Health Center – Coopers Mills  
Western Maine Family Health Center – Livermore Falls