

Sun Safety

Did you know that people who work in agriculture have a greater chance of getting skin cancer than anyone else? This is because farm work requires long hours outside. A small amount of sunlight is good for your skin, but too much can be very dangerous. Staying out of the sun is the best choice, but if it is unavoidable, there are precautions that can be taken.

Almost 95% of skin cancer is caused by the ultraviolet rays in sunlight. These rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Even though farm work needs to be done, try to spend as little time as possible outside during these hours. If you must be outside a lot, these rays can be blocked by sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection and a SPF of at least 15 or higher. Another way to keep the chances of sun damage lower is to wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat, with at least a brim of 3 inches all the way around, will shield your ears, face, neck and the top of your head, and sunglasses will block the sensitive skin around your eyes. The best way to keep the risk of skin cancer at bay is to stay out of the sun, but wearing lots of clothing and sunscreen is the next best thing.

How can you tell if you have spent too much time in the sun? When your skin is sunburned, that is a bad sign. Using lots of aloe will help to heal the burn more quickly. When your skin begins to peel where the burn was, leave it alone and do not peel the dead skin off. Your skin is trying to heal itself. The new skin is extremely sensitive, so make sure to always put on sunscreen before going outside.

Noticing the warning signs of skin cancer is imperative for your skin's health. Most skin cancers are not life threatening, especially if they are found in the early stages. However melanoma is a type of skin cancer that is dangerous and can affect not only your skin, but also other organs inside your body. Some things to look for are moles that change in color, size and shape, sores that will not heal or a new growth on your skin. These are all things that could be skin cancer. If you see any of these things on your body, you should make an appointment with your doctor immediately. The earlier skin cancer is detected, the better.

Before you go outside every day, ask yourself, "Am I being sun-safe?"

This message is brought to you by the Center for Rural Health and Farm Safety at Carle Foundation Hospital. For more information, please visit us at carle.org/farmsafety, email farmsafety@carle.com or call (217) 902-5204.