



Town of Darien

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LIMIT THE SUN, NOT THE FUN!!!

The sun is good for many things. It makes the flowers grow, warms the earth, and provides light. It also gives us a primary source of Vitamin D which helps us absorb calcium for stronger, healthier bones. However, the ultraviolet radiation in sunlight also harms our skin.

The sun's **ultraviolet A (UVA)** rays are called the "aging" rays because they cause wrinkles, age spots and tans. A tan does NOT help protect the skin from further damage; it merely produces color and a false sense of protection from the sun.

The sun's **ultraviolet B (UVB)** rays are known as the dangerous "burning" rays since they cause sunburn, cataracts, skin cancers and effects on the immune system. Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer is thought to be associated with severe UVB sunburns particularly when it occurs before the age of 20.

Melanin, a chemical found in the skin, is the first defense against the sun as it absorbs the ultraviolet (UV) rays before they can do serious damage. Melanin is found in different concentrations and colors. Hence, the lighter one's natural skin color is, the less melanin one has to absorb the UV rays and protect oneself; the darker one's natural skin color is, the more melanin one has to protect oneself. Consequently, anyone who has fair skin, hair, and eyes, has a tendency to or has developed skin moles, has a history of skin cancer and/or is chronically exposed to the sun, is significantly more at risk for sun damage.

With the right precautions, children and adults alike can safely spend time in the sun. Here are some effective strategies:

1. **Avoid the strongest rays of the day.** Seek SHADE when the sun is at its highest overhead which is 10AM-4PM. If your shadow is shorter than you are, the sun's rays are at their strongest. Even on a cloudy, cool, windy or overcast day, UV rays travel through the clouds and reflect off sand, water, snow, and even concrete. This seemingly "invisible sun" can cause unexpected sunburn and skin damage.
2. **Cover up and shield your skin from UV rays.** Ensure that your clothing can screen out the harmful rays by placing your hand inside the garments and make sure you cannot see through them. Wear a wide brimmed hat. Use umbrellas or pop-up tents on the beach or in the parks.
3. **Use a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen and lip balm with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.** Apply generously 20 minutes before sun exposure. Be sure to apply sunscreen to ears, scalp, neck, tops of feet, and backs of hands. Reapply at least every 2 hours and each time anyone gets out of the water or perspires heavily. Sunscreen should **NOT** be applied to the skin of babies under 6 months. They should be kept out of direct sunlight and protected with clothing and hats.

4. **Wear wrap-on sunglasses with 100% UV absorption.** This provides optimal protection for the eyes and surrounding skin.

5. **Double check medications** as some drugs (antibiotics, acne, heart, and blood pressure meds) **MAY** increase the skin's sensitivity to the sun.

6. **Avoid tanning beds.** *The intensity of the UV rays produced by some tanning beds can be **10-15 times** higher than those from the mid-day sun. Overuse can lead to skin cancer, wrinkling, and eye damage, especially if goggles are not worn. In the recent press release, February 28, 2011, The American Academy of Pediatrics along with the World Health Organization, The American Medical Association and the Academy of Pediatrics "supports legislation prohibiting access to tanning salons or use of artificial tanning devices for children under the age of 18".*

Remember, if we all take the above mentioned precautions, we can all have **FUN IN THE SUN!**

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