

# Healthy Me!



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## Be sun savvy over spring break

*Judy Gargus, Senior Manager, Relay For Life, Mid-South Division, American Cancer Society*

With Spring Break right around the corner, it is a good time to talk about the importance of sun safety. Although it is fun to play in the sun, there are some precautions you need to take to protect your skin. Even one bad sunburn during childhood can double the risk of developing skin cancer later in life.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer, but it is largely preventable. By following these tips from the American Cancer Society, you will be taking positive steps toward preventing skin cancer:

**1. Slip on a shirt.** It is best to use a long-sleeved shirt, but you can wear a short-sleeved one if you cover exposed skin with sunscreen.

**2. Slop on sunscreen.** It is important to use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Apply 30 minutes before you get out in the sun, and reapply every two hours when you are swimming or sweating.

**3. Slap on a hat.** The head and neck areas are some of the most common areas for skin cancer to develop. Wear a hat with a three- to four-inch brim for the best protection. If you wear a ball cap or a smaller hat, make sure to apply sunscreen to your ears and neck.

**4. Sunglasses on!** Sunglasses protect both the eyes and the skin around the eyes. Make sure to use sunglasses that block 100 percent of both UVA and UVB rays.



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**5. Seek shade.** The sun's rays are brightest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. If possible, refrain from outdoor activities during this time. If that is not possible, find some shade, like a tree or umbrella.

**6. Skip the tanning bed.** Artificial rays, like indoor tanning beds, sunlamps and booths emit harmful UV radiation, just like the sun. These are NOT safe alternatives to being out in the sun or getting a tan. There are three common myths about indoor tanning. They are:

**Myth 1:** A base tan will prevent sunburns.

**Reality:** This is untrue. There is no safe tan. There is no healthy tan.

**Myth 2:** Indoor tanning is a safe alternative to outdoor sunbathing.

**Reality:** Again, this is not true. Tanning devices emit mostly longwave ultraviolet rays. While these UVA rays reduce the risk for burns, they penetrate more deeply into the skin than UVB rays and weaken the skin's inner connective tissue.

**Myth 3:** The sun and tanning beds are the best source of Vitamin D.

**Reality:** The small Vitamin D absorption benefit the body gains from UVA/UVB rays is outweighed by the risks associated with exposure. It is better to get your Vitamin D through foods and supplements.

Be sun savvy this summer! Sunburns are not only painful, but they can permanently damage your skin. By following sun-safety tips, you can reduce your risk of developing skin cancer later in life. For more information about sun safety and the risks of indoor tanning, call 800-227-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

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