

# Health Check

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## Skin cancer prevention – simple ways to help lower your risk

An ounce of prevention is truly worth a pound of cure when it comes to lowering your risk of getting skin cancer. And although skin cancers may not always be preventable, there are simple things you can do to help lower your risk even while living under our strong Texas sun.

- **Choose an effective sunscreen.** Not all sunscreen products are created equal. Read the label for an SPF of 30 or higher and look for the words “broad spectrum.” This means it offers protection from UVA and UVB rays, as both can cause damaging sunburns that increase the likelihood of cancer cells forming. Slather a generous amount on exposed skin 30 minutes before going outside. Then reapply after swimming and every two hours if sweating profusely as when working outside.
- **Avoid direct sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** when UV rays are strongest and most damaging.
- **Dress “sun-smart.”** Wear sunglasses, a wide-brimmed hat, and sun-protection clothing such as fishing shirts found in many sports apparel stores.
- **Wear sun protection on overcast days.** Don’t kid yourself. UV rays are strong enough to travel 93 million miles to Earth and penetrate clouds to deliver damaging sunburns.
- **Avoid tanning beds.** They can deliver a concentrated flow of UV rays stronger than the midday sun.
- **African-Americans can sunburn, too.** All ethnicities should take precautions against sunburns.
- **Treating a sunburn.** Apply cool compresses and aloe vera gel on affected areas. Stay hydrated. If severely sunburned, see a doctor.
- **See a dermatologist for skin checks.** At the minimum, schedule one a year – or right away if you notice sudden changes in existing moles, freckles, bumps, or birthmarks.
- **Protect children.** Their skin is extra sensitive. A few serious sunburns can increase a child’s risk for developing skin cancer later in life. They don’t have to be at a pool or beach to need protection. Their skin needs UV protection whenever they’re outdoors.



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