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SpotSkinCancer.org

Outdoor Workers and Skin Cancer



Outdoor workers face many potential dangers in their line of work, from machinery injuries to working along the side of a busy road, but one danger they can't see is the sun's ultraviolet rays. They spend many hours in the mid-day sun, which is a major risk factor for all skin cancers, including the most serious, melanoma. Outdoor workers receive more ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure than the general public for many reasons, including:

- Long workdays spent outside in the sun.
- Sweating may also contribute to UV-related skin damage because it increases a person's photosensitivity of the skin, leading to the risk of sunburns.
- Sunscreen comes off when you sweat. Remember to reapply!
- UV radiation reflects off water, sand, concrete, light-colored surfaces and snow. Even when wearing a hat, UV radiation will reflect off the playing surface and can damage the skin.

On average, **one person dies from melanoma every hour in the United States**. The risk of melanoma can be reduced by protecting the skin from the sun and its harmful ultraviolet rays. Even on a cloudy day, up to 80% of the sun's ultraviolet rays can pass through the clouds.

Outdoor workers need to be protective of their bodies when working outdoors. With a few simple steps, you can be active and protect your skin from the sun:

- **Seek shade when appropriate.** Avoid the sun's rays when they are the strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. If your shadow appears to be shorter than you are, seek shade.

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- **Wear protective clothing**, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses, where possible. Ask for a cloth flap that can be secured to your cap or hardhat to protect the back of the neck.
- **Generously apply a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher to all exposed skin. “Broad-spectrum” provides protection from both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Reapply approximately every two hours, even on cloudy days, and after excessive sweating.
- **Use extra caution near water, snow, and sand** because they reflect and intensify the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase your chances of sunburn.
- **Avoid tanning beds.** Ultraviolet light from the sun and tanning beds can cause skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look tan, consider using a self-tanning product or spray, but continue to use sunscreen with it.
- **Know your spots** and be aware of your skin and the moles you have. If you see any mole or spot on your skin that is changing, itching, bleeding or growing, see a dermatologist.

IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!



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