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PATIENT INFORMATION SERIES

8. SUNSCREENS

- Sunburn should be avoided by all people of all ages. There is no doubt that sun exposure causes skin cancer and prematurely ages the skin. Even burns in childhood are a major risk factor for all types of skin cancer decades later.
- A person gets 80% of their lifetime sun exposure before age 18, thus protection of children and adolescents is of particular concern. The skin remembers every tan and burn. The damage is cumulative. You don't have to sunbathe, deliberately tan or even enjoy the sun to get skin cancer.
- Minimize your sun-induced skin damage four ways:
 - WEAR HATS, SUNGLASSES AND SHIRTS
 - AVOID NOON SUN
 - LOOK FOR SHADE
 - USE SUNSCREEN
- There is no such thing as a safe tan, a tan only offers minimal protection from further UV damage. It is dangerous to believe that a sunscreen allows unlimited exposure to the sun. No matter how high the SPF, sun gets through.
- Waterproof is better than water resistant and is desirable for any sunscreen. It takes about an ounce to cover an entire body. It also takes as much as 20 minutes for the sunscreen to really work. All sunscreens need to be frequently reapplied. Use broad spectrum sunscreens that block UVA and UVB.
- “Chemical-free” sunscreens are really physical sunscreens that use very small particles of titanium dioxide and zinc oxide to block the ultraviolet rays. These sunscreens usually have lower SPF's but are more inert and are better for people with sensitive skin or allergies to sunscreen ingredients.
- Broad spectrum means the sunscreen blocks UVA and UVB, almost all brands do this well but some do it better.

Good Brand Name Sunscreens, use SPF #50 or higher:

Neutrogena

Coppertone

La Roche-Posay Anthelios