

Contact person:
Lisa Gulla, Health Officer
973 593 3079 x 1



For Immediate Release

Sun Safety for the Whole Family

Most people enjoy spending time outside in the warmth of summer – especially after a long, cold winter like the one this year. The Springfield Board of Health encourages residents to enjoy summer activities and outdoor fun, but to protect their skin while doing so.

Applying “broad spectrum” sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 is a must for everyone who goes outdoors, regardless of skin color. The sun’s ultraviolet rays contain both UVA and UVB rays; UVA’s are linked to wrinkles and UVB to the development of skin cancer, neither of which is desirable. It is also recommended to stay out of the sun between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. when the sun’s rays are the strongest. If a person must be in the sun during this time, sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes before going out and be reapplied every two hours and/or after swimming or sweating.

Families are especially urged to **protect children** from the sun! Consistent use of sunscreen on children before age 18 may reduce lifetime exposure of certain skin cancers by nearly 80 percent. Risk of skin cancer during a child’s lifetime doubles if they get just 5 sunburns.

Children and adults should seek shade when outside, especially in the middle of the day. Practice the shadow rule: if your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are at their strongest and should be avoided.

Contrary to popular belief, **tanning the skin is not healthy**. Getting tan is another sign of skin damage. Those who tan have more of certain chemicals that may help prevent burns, but exposure to sun still damages skin and leads to wrinkles and age spots. Tanning beds are NEVER good for skin. Experts now say that tanning is as dangerous as smoking cigarettes or being exposed to second hand smoke. Those who tan before age 30 are 75% more likely to develop skin cancer in their lives.

People who enjoy the appearance of a tan can use spray tanning products which are much safer- they give the look of a tan without the sun damage.

"Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap"! These simple steps can help anyone in the family take better care of their skin when they are out in the sun. "Slip" on a shirt or other protective clothing to cover as much of the body as possible; "Slop" sunscreen generously on any exposed skin, about a palmful or one ounce for an adult; "Slap" on a wide-brimmed hat to protect the neck and face; and finally, "Wrap" on sunglasses with 99-100% UV absorption to provide optimal eye protection.

In 2013 there is no excuse for leaving skin unprotected and exposed to the harshness of the sun's rays. Many excellent clothing, lotion, cosmetic

and protective gear products are available to help protect skin from sun damage. People are urged to find what works best for them and then enjoy the fun of summer now that it is here.

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