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WRITTEN BY KELLY MOTADEL
SATURDAY, 27 JUNE 2009 19:34

Tips For Enjoying The Summer Weather

By Kelly Motadel, Vista Community Clinic



The summer months allow us to enjoy longer days and a wide variety of outdoor activities. They provide important family bonding time. In fact, it is the perfect time of year for children to explore nature, or at least their local neighborhood. And with the summer comes sun.

Children will rush outdoors in the freezing cold or blistering hot without thinking twice about the consequences. It is important for parents to make sure they are protected from the elements. In the summer, this means wearing a hat, sunscreen and clothing.

Sunscreen is a must. It protects our skin against skin cancer and from painful burns and blisters. How do you select the right sunscreen? It's important to look at the labels. A good sunscreen will offer protection against both UVA and UVB rays. This is called broad spectrum protectant.

Does your child like to swim or play in the sprinklers? If so, then you'll want a waterproof sunscreen. There is a difference between waterproof and water resistant. Waterproof sunscreen can provide protection in the water for at least 80 minutes while water resistant sunscreen usually lasts 40 minutes.

A simple t-shirt can provide some but not all of the much needed sun protection during a day spent at the beach. How do you know if a piece of clothing offers protection? A good rule of thumb is that if you can see light through the clothing, Ultraviolet rays can get through. Combine clothing with sunscreen and you'll be

more protected.

Sun bounces off reflective surfaces. It is magnified by water, sand and snow. Knowing this, it is especially important to be skin safe when at the beach or playing in water of any kind. Even if it is cloudy or you are under an umbrella, the UV rays can still find you. Wear sunscreen no matter what.

If at all possible, have children play outdoors during the morning, late afternoon and evening but stay indoors during the midday. The midday (10am – 4pm) is the hottest part of the day and it is when the UV rays from the sun are the strongest. If children are outdoors during this time, ensure there is appropriate shade available and protection is worn.

Some medication such as antibiotics and some acne medications can make the skin more susceptible to sunburn and sun damage. Other medications may cause irritation, rashes and swelling as a result of sun exposure. If you are concerned about a medication, please speak with your pharmacist or physician.

Why all the fuss? Beyond giving us painful sunburns, over exposure to UV rays is also the leading cause of skin cancer, which affects approximately 1.3 million Americans each year. There are five warning signs to look out for in a skin abnormality.

Asymmetry: it is a different shape on one side than the other.

Border: the border is irregular or difficult to distinguish.

Color: there are many colors within the spot or the color is changing.

Diameter: the size is greater than six millimeters or approximately ¼ inch.

Evolution: it is changing.

Not every spot that falls into these categories is a melanoma; but, any spot that has any of these characteristics should be checked by a physician as soon as possible. This summer, these simple tips will help you enjoy your family and protect your loved ones. Happy summer!

Kelly Motadel, M.D., M.P.H. is the Medical Director for Vista Community Clinic. For more information, please visit our website www.vistacommunityclinic.org. To make an appointment please call (760) 631-5000.

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