

Safely basking in the rays

Summer is the perfect time of year to get outside, be active and enjoy the sun. But by not taking the right safeguards to avoid overexposure to harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation, you could be putting yourself at risk for getting skin cancer. Also, be sure to talk to your physician about the right amount of fluids for you during the summer months and the medications you take that require you to minimize your exposure to the sun.

UV rays and skin cancer

UV rays are an unseen type of radiation that comes from the sun, tanning beds and sunlamps. UV rays have the ability to go through and change skin cells, causing many of the skin changes that we think are a normal part of aging. These changes can possibly lead to skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. While some types of skin cancer are highly treatable, the third most common skin cancer – melanoma – is more dangerous. Between 65 and 90 percent of melanomas are caused by being in contact with UV radiation.

Steps toward prevention

UV rays are at their strongest in the middle of the day, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., during the late spring and early summer. Take these steps to help you safely enjoy the sun:

- Avoid direct sunlight by seeking shade.
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing hats, pants and long sleeves.
- Don't use indoor tanning beds or sunlamps.
- Wear sunglasses that block 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

Giving you health information so you can make smart health care choices is just one more way Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey is *Making Healthcare Work*.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <www.cdc.gov>.

