

THE SURGEON GENERAL'S CALL TO ACTION TO PREVENT SKIN CANCER



From the Surgeon General

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. This disease can greatly reduce quality of life, and it can be disfiguring and even deadly. Medical treatment for skin cancer is costly for individuals, families, and the nation. The good news is that most cases of skin cancer can be prevented.

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Skin Cancer calls on partners in prevention from various sectors across the nation to address skin cancer as a major public health problem. Government, business, health, education, community, nonprofit, and faith-based sectors are all essential partners in this effort.

In this *Call to Action*, the Surgeon General sets forth five main goals that will serve as a road map for all Americans in their efforts to reverse the rising tide of skin cancer:

- Increase opportunities for sun protection in outdoor settings.
- Provide individuals with the information they need to make

informed, healthy choices about their exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays.

- Promote policies that advance the national goal of preventing skin cancer.
- Reduce harms from indoor tanning.
- Strengthen research, surveillance, monitoring, and evaluation related to skin cancer prevention.

With sustained support and a unified approach, we can achieve major reductions in skin cancer-related illness, deaths, and healthcare costs.



The Surgeon General uses the best scientific information available to promote health, reduce risk for illness and injury, and to make the nation healthier. To read the full report and its related materials, go to: www.surgeongeneral.gov.



**More than
1/3 of U.S.
adults have
been sunburned
in the past
year alone.
Sunburn is
a clear sign of
overexposure
to UV rays, a
major cause of
skin cancer.**

Skin cancer is common and costly.

Each year in the United States, nearly 5 million people are treated for skin cancer at a cost that exceeds \$8.1 billion.

Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, is responsible for nearly 9,000 deaths each year. It is also one of the most common types of cancer among U.S. adolescents and young adults.

UV (ultraviolet) exposure is a major cause of skin cancer—and the most preventable.

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Skin Cancer focuses on UV

radiation because it is the most preventable cause of skin cancer. Genetic factors, such as being fair-skinned or having a family history of skin cancer, increase a person's risk. But the most common types of skin cancer are also strongly associated with exposure to UV radiation. As many as 90% of melanomas are caused by UV exposure.

UV exposure is the most preventable cause of skin cancer because—unlike genetic factors—skin cancer risk from UV exposure can be reduced. Take steps to avoid excessive or unnecessary UV

Skin cancer rates are on the rise. Although rates of many of the most common types of cancers are decreasing in the U.S., rates of skin cancer are increasing.

Skin cancer is more common than all other types of cancer. The number of Americans who have had skin cancer in the past three decades is estimated to be higher than the number for all other cancers combined.

exposures, such as long sun exposure without enough sun protection. Tanned skin is the body's response to injury from UV rays. Avoid tanning on purpose, either with indoor tanning devices or in the sun.

For most people in the United States, the sun is the most common source of exposure to UV rays. UV radiation from indoor tanning devices is a less common but easier-to-avoid source of exposure than from the sun.

Indoor tanning increases the risk of skin cancer, including melanoma.

Indoor tanning devices, such as tanning beds, tanning booths, and sun lamps, expose users to intense UV radiation as a way to tan the skin for cosmetic reasons.

Indoor tanning has been linked with skin cancers, including melanoma (the deadliest type of skin cancer), basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma.

Starting indoor tanning at younger ages appears to be more strongly related to lifetime skin cancer risk, possibly because of the accumulation of UV exposure

over time from more years of tanning. Indoor tanning can also cause other health problems. An estimated 3,000 Americans each year go to emergency

rooms with injuries caused by indoor tanning, including burns to the skin and eye damage.

1 OUT OF 3 young white women ages 16-25 indoor tan each year



Every time you tan you increase your risk of getting melanoma. Indoor tanning can also:

- Cause premature skin aging, like wrinkles and age spots.
- Damage your skin texture.
- Increase the risk of potentially blinding eye diseases.

MYTHS ABOUT TANNING

MYTH:

A “base tan” will protect me from a sunburn.

MYTH:

Tanning indoors is safer than tanning in the sun.

MYTH:

Tanning is a safe way to get vitamin D, which prevents many health problems.

FACT:

A “base tan” is not a safe tan. A tan means you have damaged your skin.

FACT:

Tanning indoors is not safer than tanning in the sun.

FACT:

Tanning is not a safe way to get vitamin D.

The best way to protect your skin from UV rays is by using effective sun protection, such as staying in the shade, wearing hats and other protective clothing, using broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15+, and avoiding indoor tanning.

Indoor tanning and tanning outside are both dangerous. You can get a burn from tanning indoors. **Tanned skin is damaged skin.**

Although it is important to get enough vitamin D, the safest way is through what you eat. **Tanning harms your skin.**



*Keep
your
skin
healthy.
Avoid
sunbathing
and
indoor
tanning.*

EVERYONE CAN PLAY A PART IN PREVENTING SKIN CANCER

What can policymakers do?

- Incorporate sun-safety education and sun protection into school policies at the district or state level.
- Enforce existing indoor tanning laws.
- Support shade planning in land use development.



What can businesses and employers do?



- Increase availability of sun protection for outdoor workers.
- Modify work environments and schedules, when feasible, to protect workers from overexposure to UV radiation.
- Incorporate sun safety into workplace policies, safety trainings, and wellness programs.

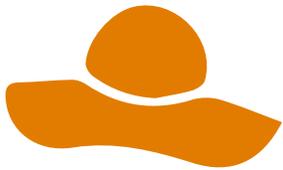
What can health care systems, insurers, and clinicians do?

- Counsel patients on using sun protection and avoiding intentional tanning in accordance with U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations.
- Increase awareness of and adherence to melanoma reporting requirements among providers, especially those in private practice.
- Remain alert to suspicious skin lesions when examining patients.



What can early learning centers, schools, colleges, and universities do?

- Identify opportunities to increase shade through relocating activities or providing shade structures in key locations.
- Eliminate barriers to individual sun protection (such as policies that prohibit the use of hats or sunscreen).
- Support sun protection in outdoor athletic settings.
- Discourage indoor tanning by students and reconsider campus practices that may encourage indoor tanning.



What can community, non-profit, and faith-based organizations do?

- Support effective shade planning in the community.
- Encourage vendors in outdoor recreation areas to sell sun protection products.
- Work collaboratively to support skin cancer prevention in the community.



What can individuals and families do?

- While leading healthy, active lives and enjoying the outdoors, choose sun protection strategies that work:
 - Wear a hat, sunglasses, and other protective clothing, and seek shade, especially during midday hours.
 - Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15+ to protect any exposed skin; remember that sunscreen is most effective when used in combination with other methods.



POLICYMAKERS



BUSINESSES & EMPLOYERS



COMMUNITY, NON-PROFIT, & FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS



EVERYONE CAN PLAY A ROLE TO **REDUCE SKIN CANCER**



INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES



**HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS,
INSURERS, & CLINICIANS**



**EARLY LEARNING CENTERS,
SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, & UNIVERSITIES**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin or www.surgeongeneral.gov

