

Sunburn is a Risk for Everyone's Health

As summer arrives and you head outside, take care to avoid sun exposure that may lead to skin cancer. This is something we all need to do, including people with darker skin.

"It's a myth that black skin doesn't sunburn. It may take longer and it may not show up as red skin the way it does on lighter skinned people, but it does burn," says Dr. Michael Ward, a family medicine physician and sports medicine specialist at Advocate South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest, IL. "And, this myth should not keep African Americans from protecting themselves from sun damage and melanoma with sunscreen."



Often, melanoma begins as an abnormal mole, says Dr. Ward. In white people, melanomas often develop on the trunk (chest and back) and legs, but he says that in African Americans, melanomas are most often found under the nails, on the palms of hands, and on the soles of the feet.

If you notice any such changes, see a doctor immediately. Melanoma that is detected and treated early can usually be cured.

Look Cool... And Protect Yourself, Too!

The summer sun brings plenty of fun and outdoor activities. But all that sunlight exposes your eyes to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which has been linked to a number of eye conditions, including cataracts and early onset age-related macular degeneration.

Dr. William Seng Tan, a family medicine physician on staff at Advocate South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest, IL, offers some basic tips to help you pick the right sunglasses to protect the only eyes you have.

Go 100 Percent

"Look for a sticker or tag indicating that they block 100 percent of UV rays, or very close to that," Dr. Tan says. Labels that say "UV absorption up to 400 nm" or "Meets ANSI UV Requirements" mean the glasses block at least 99 percent of UV rays. Those labeled "cosmetic" block about 70 percent of UV rays.

You Don't Have to Break the Bank

"Sunglasses don't have to cost a lot of money to protect you," Dr. Tan says. "Less expensive pairs can be just as effective as pricier options, as long as they meet the ANSI requirements or the 400 nm absorption threshold."

Darker Doesn't Mean Better

"Darker glasses that don't block all, or nearly all, UV light actually allow more of these higher-energy waves into the eye," Dr. Tan says. "These non-protective dark glasses create an artificial low-light environment that cause your pupils to open up more, allowing more UV radiation in, and potentially leading to greater danger and damage."

Don't Mistake Polarization with UV Protection

Polarization won't help preserve eye health, but it can make activities like driving or being on the water safer or more enjoyable.

Prayer: God, thank you for the miracle of sight!