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DPH: Play it Safe in the Sun

Hartford – With the start of summer, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds residents to protect their skin from the sun’s ultraviolet (UV) rays and use sunscreen correctly.

According to federal health officials, skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States and the most common cancer among 20 to 30 year-olds. It's estimated that one American dies every hour from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. In Connecticut, there were 930 cases of malignant melanoma diagnosed in 2009, and 100 deaths from the disease. Melanoma rates continue to rise, especially among adolescent girls.

Connecticut residents and visitors should protect their skin to help reduce rates of skin cancer from overexposure to the sun’s UV rays. Sunscreen can offer some protection. However, products with a high (over 50) SPF (sun protection factor) rating offer an insignificant amount of added protection. Sunscreens with SPF ratings over 50 may mislead people to believe they are more protected than they actually are, causing them to stay in the sun too long or not reapply sunscreen as often as recommended.

Playing it Safe in the Sun

1. Avoid Too Much Sun: Wear protective clothing (shirt, hat, pants, sunglasses) when in the sun; seek shade as much as possible; avoid mid-day sun.
2. Apply Sunscreen to Exposed Skin: Apply 15 minutes before sun exposure; apply a generous coat and reapply every 2 hours or more often if getting wet or sweating heavily.
3. Choose Sunscreen Wisely: Look at the label. Choose a sunscreen that:
 - Offers broad spectrum (UV-A & UV-B) protection.
 - Is rated as SPF 15 or higher. Products with SPF ratings over 50 do not provide significantly more protection. SPF numbers only indicate protection against UV-B radiation.
 - Contains zinc oxide as the active ingredient or as a blend with titanium dioxide. These mineral blockers are preferable to chemical absorbers. Avoid products with oxybenzone which has endocrine-disrupting activity.
 - Is water resistant.

For more information:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency SunWise Program: www.epa.gov/sunwise

Environmental Working Group 2013 Sunscreen Report: www.ewg.org/2013sunscreen

DPH Fact Sheet: [Playing It Safe in the Sun](#)