

# WELL NOW

THE STUDENT HEALTH CENTER NEWSLETTER

## When the sun isn't fun

By Sheri Helms

Ah, Spring... it ushers in thoughts of warm, sunny days; sunny days that will bring enough sunshine to give us that golden-bronze tan of health. But is that tan very healthy? According to the American Cancer Society, over 600,000 new cases of skin cancer are reported each year and 90 percent of all skin cancers appear on parts of the body we don't usually cover with clothing such as the face, tips of ears, and the hands. One of the leading risk factors to skin cancer is excessive exposure to the sun. So, before you rush out into the sun take some time to learn how to protect your skin.

The sun rays that cause your skin to tan are ultraviolet A and B rays. When these rays reach your body they trigger a pigment in your skin called melanin. The melanin absorbs the rays; and as your body contacts with more sunlight, the melanin rises to the skin's surface creating a tanned effect. The melanin is actually trying to defend your skin from the

harmful effects of the sun's radiation: sunburns, cataracts, premature aging of the skin, and skin cancers to name a few.

Some people have more melanin in their skin than others. The fairer your skin, the less melanin you have, which means the less natural protection you have against UV rays and the higher your risk of skin cancer. Although it is common for us to think that only fair-skinned people need to use sunscreen, even those with a darker complexion can benefit from sunscreen. For example, the depletion of the

ozone layer (a layer in the atmosphere that filters out much of the sun's radiation) will allow more UV rays to hit the earth, and you, in more intense concentrations. The E.P.A. estimates that for every one percent depletion of the ozone layer there will be a five percent increase in skin cancer rates. The loss of the ozone layer decreases the amount of time you are able to spend in the sun safely, unless you use a sunscreen.

Sunscreen acts like melanin, absorbing in UV rays, and giving you more protection from the sun. Choose a sunscreen based

on your complexion. If you have a fair complexion, use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) number of 8 to 15+. If your complexion is darker use a sunscreen with a lower SPF number, 2 to 6. SPF numbers tell how much added protection the sunscreen gives. For example, if you can only stay in the sun for an hour before you burn, a sunscreen with an SPF of 6 will let you stay in the sun for three hours without burning (six times as long as usual). As your tan becomes darker you can use a lower SPF sunscreen.

It is best to apply the sunscreen 1/2 hour to one hour before sunbathing so it can be absorbed and won't be easily washed away if you perspire. And don't let those clouds fool you! Although clouds filter out much of the sun's light and heat, clouds let up to 80 percent of the UV radiation through.

So, take the initiative this Spring to start a healthy habit, and a healthy tan — USE SUNSCREEN. You'll thank yourself!



### FROM THE HIP

#### INSIDE

SMART  
SNACKING

THE DIET  
MYTH

WHICH AEROBIC  
CLASS IS BEST  
FOR ME?

Do you know what  
your cholesterol  
number is?

Come to Health Education in the Student Health Center for a FREE cholesterol test on Tuesdays only from 9 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. For more information call 346-4456.

#### DID YOU KNOW ...

The sun's ultraviolet rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Exposure to the sun is a leading risk factor of skin cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates there are 8,500 skin cancer deaths annually in the U.S. So be sure to use a sunscreen or protective clothing.

#### NEED SOME PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE FOR THE

"REAL" WORLD???

Peer Health Advising, HEP 410 and 510 offers practical experience in public speaking, facilitating groups, organizing promotion projects and writing for the Well Now. You must apply, so drop by Health Education in the Student Health Center. For more information call 346-4456.

#### BACKACHES???

Here are some hints to prevent them: 1) Don't sit for extended periods of time, 2) Do begin a stretching program, 3) Do balance the bags you're carrying on each side of your body, 4) Don't jerk-lift anything, stuck windows included, 5) Don't bend from the waist, and 6) Do bend at the knees and use your legs to lift things — not your back!