

Learn how to protect your skin from cancers caused by the sun

As we soak up the sun's rays, we often do not consider that we are putting ourselves at risk for skin cancer, the most common form of cancer in the U.S. More than one million skin cancers are diagnosed each year. Most skin cancer deaths are caused by malignant melanoma. A person today is twice as likely to develop melanoma than 10 years ago, and 12 times as likely than 50 years ago. This is probably be-

cause more ultraviolet (UV) radiation is reaching the earth as the ozone layer is depleted.

Skin cancer can affect anyone regardless of race or skin color. However, it is more common in people with fair or light-color skin, those with a family history of skin cancer, people who spend a lot of time outdoors working in the sun, and people who were severely sunburned as children. One serious sunburn can increase the

risk of skin cancer by as much as 50 percent. Here are some tips for protecting yourself:

- Stay out of the sun, especially from 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. when the sun's rays are most damaging. Arrange outside activities around these times and seek as much shade as possible. You *can* burn on a cloudy day.

- Wear protective clothes such as a long-sleeve shirt and long pants. Dark colors gener-

ally provide more protection than light colors. Covering up doesn't block out all UV rays. A typical light T-shirt usually provides less protection than a sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.

- Wear a sun-safe hat. Baseball hats do not protect vulnerable areas on your ears, face, or neck. Try a wide-brim hat made of tightly woven fabric.

- Do *not* use tanning beds or

sun lamps. They give off just as much UV radiation as the sun.

- Finally, check your skin every month for abnormal or changing areas, especially moles. Use a mirror or ask a family member to check areas you cannot see. Ask your doctor to examine questionable areas.

Source: Denise Rennekamp, Oregon State University.

Lightning kills: Do you know how to avoid this common danger?

Lightning is the second cause of storm deaths in the U.S., killing more than tornadoes or hurricanes. Lightning also inflicts life-long debilitating injury on many more than it kills. While Florida is the 'Thunderstorm Capital' of the U.S., other parts of the country have lots of lightning, too, especially in the Southeast, Midwest, and the front ranges of the Rocky Mountains. However, all states have some lightning threat.

Most of the lightning deaths and injuries are easily avoided.

Remember, no place outside is safe near a thunderstorm, so when thunder roars, go indoors!

The annual Lightning Safety Awareness Week is June 24-30. The awareness campaign will cover general lightning safety (indoors and outdoors), lightning science, and the medical aspects of lightning. Learn more at www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov.

The first step in lightning safety is to plan your outdoor activities to avoid as much of

the lightning threat as you can. Watch local weather forecasts and know your local weather patterns. The forecast from your local National Weather Service office can be found at www.weather.gov or through www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov.

When outside, use the '30-30 Rule' to know if lightning is close enough to be a danger. When you see lightning, count the time until you hear its thunder. If that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is close enough to be a threat – go inside immediately. If you can't see the lightning, then a back-up rule is that just hearing thunder means the lightning is close enough to be a threat.

Don't go outside until 30 minutes or more after hearing the last thunder. When outside, also watch the skies for locally developing thunderstorms. If thunderstorms are brewing nearby, go inside even before the first lightning flash.

The safest place from lightning that is readily available to most people, is inside a large, fully enclosed building with wiring and plumbing, e.g. a typ-

ical house. But stay away from any conducting path to the outside: corded telephones, electrical appliances, and plumbing. Don't watch lightning from doorways or windows. If you can't get to a house, a vehicle with a metal roof and metal sides is a good second choice. Roll-up the windows, lean away from the door, and don't touch any conducting path going outside, e.g. radio, keys in the ignition, steering wheel, etc. Remember, it's not the rubber tires insulating you from the ground that make vehicles safe, but rather the metal shell that conducts the electricity around you – convertibles, motorcycles, cars made of fiberglass and plastic, and open shelled outdoor recreation vehicles don't count.

If you can't get to a house or vehicle, then at least avoid the most hazardous places and activities. Stay off elevated places, like mountains, buildings, high playground equipment, etc. Keep away from open areas, including sports fields and beaches. Get away from tall isolated objects like trees. Going under trees to keep dry persists as the second leading cause of lightning casualties in the U.S. Don't do this; going under trees is just asking to be hit by lightning! Stop wa-

ter related activities, including swimming, boating, and fishing. Get out of the pool at the first hint of lightning threat! Get off of open vehicles like cabin-less tractors, bulldozers, etc.

Remember, **NO PLACE OUTSIDE IS SAFE NEAR A THUNDERSTORM** – you are much safer going inside a house or car. **WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS!**

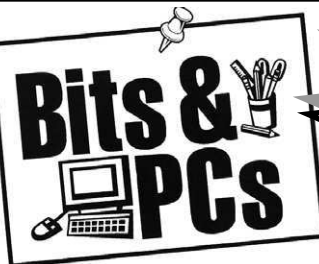
All lightning deaths are from cardiac arrest. Stopped breathing may follow the stopped heart. First call 9-1-1 to get professional medical help. Then apply CPR or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, as appropriate. A common myth is that lightning victims are electrified. False! It is perfectly safe to give first aid to a lightning victim (just make sure they aren't touching live power wires). Ninety percent of lightning victims survive, so your first aid has an excellent chance of saving a life.

Lightning is definitely the underrated thunderstorm threat. While no set of guidelines can give you 100 percent guaranteed safety from lightning, the procedures discussed above can help you avoid most lightning casualties. For more information on lightning safety, visit www.lightningsafety.n.

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