

# 5 SKIN TIPS FOR SUMMER

Dermatologists explain how to protect your body's largest organ now that warm weather is here.

**At this time of year**, the warm sun is inviting—but it should also invite you to take sensible precautions. The sun's UV (ultraviolet) rays can damage your skin in as little as 15 minutes, putting you at risk for melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer. It can also prematurely age skin. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) suggests that you stay out of the sun during the peak hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., seeking shade if you must be outdoors. Five more tips from two Bergen-based dermatologists can help you make 2021 your safest skin summer ever:

■ **Use broad-spectrum sunscreen.** The AAD recommends applying sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30+, no matter what you're doing or what time of day you're outside, says Naana Boakye, M.D., owner of Bergen Dermatology in Englewood Cliffs. Dr. Boakye actually prefers sunscreen with an SPF of 50+ that includes an ingredient called iron oxide, which blocks the visible light we get from electronics and overhead fixtures. She adds that sunscreen should be "broad-spectrum" as well, meaning that it protects from both UVA rays (which cause aging) and UVB ones (which cause burning). And don't forget to reapply every two hours if you're swimming—or sweating.

■ **Protect your eyes.** Besides applying sunscreen to your eyelids, wear sunglasses outdoors. "UV protection for sunglasses is critical because it can reduce the risk of macular degeneration and cataracts," says Aanand N. Geria, M.D., medical director of Geria Dermatology in Rutherford. He suggests looking for sunglasses whose label says they're "100 percent protection against both UVA and UVB," or those marked UV400, which means they'll block rays at the top level of the ultraviolet spectrum, 400 nanometers or less—in other words, 99 to 100 percent of ultraviolet light.

■ **Dress for success.** You need to protect your face and your body when you're out in the sun for long periods of time. Dr. Boakye recommends tight woven clothing in dark fabrics, or ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) shirts, which block 98 percent of the sun's rays, thus reducing your exposure risk

significantly. "I love these options for kids going to camp," the doc says, "or for adults who will be at the beach for an extended amount of time and cannot apply sunscreen religiously."

■ **Examine your skin.** In between visits to the dermatologist, remain diligent about checking your skin at home, and be on the lookout for suspicious-looking brown spots. Says Dr. Geria: "It's important to remember the 'ABCDE' signs of melanoma: A for asymmetry, B for irregular borders, C for multiple colors, D for diameter over six millimeters or dark and E for evolving. If you notice any of these warning signs or see a spot that is changing in size or color or has a new symptom such as bleeding, crusting or itching, make sure you see a board-certified dermatologist promptly."

■ **Know the stats.** Like many other cancers, melanoma can affect men

and women, young and old. The American Cancer Society estimates that about 106,110 new melanomas will be diagnosed in 2021, about 62,260 in men and 43,850 in women, and some 7,180 people of those diagnosed will die. "Wear sunscreen 365 days a year!" Dr. Boakye stresses.

## MELANOMA BY THE NUMBERS

Rutherford-based skin specialist Aanand N. Geria, M.D., shares these stats about the most dangerous skin cancer:

**1 IN 38:** The lifetime risk of melanoma for white people.

**5:** The number of sunburns in one's lifetime that doubles the risk of melanoma.

**20:** The number of times the risk of melanoma is higher in white people than in black people.

**65:** The age by which men are twice as likely as women to get melanoma.