

Preventing the skin cancer, not just the sunburn

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(Medical Xpress) -- With the first day of spring just one week away, anyone who spends time in the sun should be aware of new sunscreen regulations designed to help prevent skin cancer.

The U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) has released new requirements for sunscreens which will go into effect by this summer, but [consumers](#) should already be looking for new labels.

Until now, [sunscreen](#) rules have mainly focused on preventing sunburns which are caused by ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation from the sun. Many sunscreens did not protect consumers from ultraviolet A (UVA) rays which contribute to both skin aging and [skin cancer](#).

Now, consumers should look for sunscreens labeled "Broad Spectrum" because these products will protect against both UVA and [UVB radiation](#). The [FDA](#) also recommends consumers pick a sunscreen with an SPF value of 15 or higher.

Theresa Pacheco, MD, regularly sees patients at the University of Colorado Hospital's Dermatology Department whose skin has been damaged by overexposure to the sun.

"Many people don't understand how serious malignant melanoma can be," Pacheco says. "This cancer kills about one person every hour in the United States, and I tell my patients that most of these cases could have been prevented by regularly using sunscreen."

Pacheco is also an investigator at the University of Colorado Cancer Center.

While using effective sunscreen is important, dermatologists at the University of Colorado Hospital also recommend:

- Replace sunscreen after a year - it starts to lose its effectiveness as it ages.
- Limit time in the sun, especially when the sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- Reapply sunscreen regularly when spending extended time outside, especially after swimming or sweating.
- Use a water resistant sunscreen if you're going to be swimming or sweating.
- Wear hats, long-sleeved shirts and pants to cover exposed skin.

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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