

Have Fun In The Sun While Also Staying Safe - May Is Skin Cancer Awareness Month

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O'FALLON, BREESE, HIGHLAND & GREENVILLE, IL— According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can damage skin in as little as 15 minutes.

With Memorial Day marking the “unofficial” start of summer and May being Skin Cancer Awareness Month, HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital in O'Fallon, HSHS Holy

Family Hospital in Greenville, and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospitals in Breese and Highland are encouraging sun safety awareness and reminding everyone to protect their skin while enjoying the outdoors.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. According to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), approximately 9,500 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with skin cancer every day. The good news is that skin cancer is also one of the most preventable cancers.

Following guidance from the AAD and the CDC, HSHS St. Elizabeth's, HSHS Holy Family, and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospitals offer the following reminders to help keep you and your family safe when having fun in the sun:

- **Wear sunscreen:** Applying sunscreen isn't just for those times that you take your kids to the pool or the beach. It is important year-round and anytime you will be outside for an activity for any length of time with limited or no shade, such as doing yard work, while watching a ballgame or taking an afternoon walk. Even if it isn't a bright sunny day, sunscreen is still important – the sun is always emitting ultraviolet (UV) rays, and even on cloudy days up to 80% of the sun's harmful UV rays can penetrate your skin. Make sure your sunscreen has an SPF of 30 or higher and has both ultraviolet-A (UVA) and ultraviolet-B (UVB) broad spectrum protection. Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours and after swimming, sweating or toweling off.
- **Stay in the shade:** This is important during certain hours of the day, especially during late morning through mid-afternoon. The sun's rays are the strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. According to the AAD, a good indicator of when you should stay in the shade is to look at your shadow. Any time your shadow appears shorter than you, you should seek shade.
- **Cover up:** Wide-brimmed hats that shade your face, head, ears and neck is helpful for protecting those sensitive areas. A lightweight shirt or cover-up to wear over a swimsuit can also protect your skin from harmful UV rays. Swimsuit manufacturers are also supporting sun safety by creating more options for swimwear that covers more skin such as swim shirts.