myHealth CONNECTIONS
PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

ignites

Wellness Wednesdays

JUNE, 2025 WEEK 2

STAY COOL, STAY COVERED, STAY HYDRATED: Soaking Up the Sun, Safely

Sunny skies and warm days make summer truly special! At the same time, summer brings an increased risk for sunburn, dehydration, and long-term skin damage. Incorporating the following tips will help you can enjoy everything the season has to offer while protecting your health from the inside out.

Two of the easiest ways to stay safe in the heat are using sunscreen properly and making hydration a daily priority. With just a few simple habits, you can lower your risk of skin cancer, keep your energy up, and stay cool through every summer activity.

SUNSCREEN IS YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

Wearing sunscreen is one of the most important things you can do to protect your skin. Regular use helps prevent sunburn, premature aging, and skin cancer—including melanoma, the deadliest form. But sunscreen is only effective when used correctly.

Health Expert Suncare Recommendations:

1. **Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.** This protects against both UVA and UVB rays.
2. **Apply it generously to all exposed skin.** That includes ears, neck, tops of feet, and the back of your hands.
3. **Use enough!** Most adults need about one ounce (a shot-glass full) per application.
4. **Apply 30 minutes prior to going outdoors.** Reapply every two hours, or more often if you're swimming or sweating.
5. **Even on cloudy days** or during short outdoor trips, sunscreen is still necessary. UV rays can still cause damage.
6. **Don't forget lip balm with SPF** and UV-blocking sunglasses to protect delicate skin around your eyes.

In addition to sunscreen, wear light, long-sleeved clothing, seek shade during peak sun hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.), and wear a wide-brimmed hat for added protection.

FOLLOW THE MOUSE:
We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

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WHY SUNSCREEN IS SO IMPORTANT

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, and rates of melanoma steadily rise. Sunburn isn't just a temporary discomfort, but a sign of skin damage that can increase your risk for skin cancer over time. According to dermatologists, even a few serious sunburns during childhood or adolescence can double the chances of developing melanoma later in life.

Daily sunscreen use helps protect your skin from two harmful types of ultraviolet radiation:

- UVA rays = Age skin (skin is the largest organ in the body) and contribute to wrinkles and sunspots
- UVB rays = Create burns and play a key role in skin cancer development

While some people assume darker skin tones don't need sunscreen, the truth is that anyone can get sunburned, and all skin types are at risk of UV damage. In fact, because sun damage may be less visible on darker skin, skin cancer is often diagnosed later and at more serious stages in people of color.

HYDRATION: YOUR SUMMER SUPERPOWER

In hot weather, your body loses fluids and electrolytes faster through sweat, whether you notice it or not. Dehydration can sneak up on you, leading to symptoms like headaches, fatigue, dry mouth, dizziness, and even heat exhaustion.

Staying hydrated is essential for regulating body temperature, keeping energy levels up, and protecting your heart and kidneys..

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

It's important to recognize early signs of heat stress and dehydration, especially during exercise or long periods outdoors. Look out for:

- Thirst or dry mouth
- Lightheadedness
- Muscle cramps
- Unusual fatigue
- Dark yellow urine

If you notice these symptoms, find shade, rest, and drink water immediately. In extreme heat, it's better to take frequent breaks than to push through.

YOUR SUMMER WELLNESS CHECKLIST

To stay safe and energized this season, try building these healthy habits into your day:

- ☑ Apply sunscreen before heading outside
- ☑ Drink water regularly and eat hydrating foods
- ☑ Take breaks in the shade when needed
- ☑ Wear breathable clothing and UV-blocking gear
- ☑ Plan outdoor activities during cooler hours

BCBSIL RESOURCES ARE HERE TO HELP

Your benefits include tools and support to help you stay well all summer long. Through BCBSIL Resources, you can:

- Find preventive care options, like skin checks and annual physicals
- Access wellness discounts, including fitness trackers and sun-protection gear
- Explore health tools and educational resources through Blue Access for Members

Summer is a time to recharge, explore, and enjoy the outdoors. Prioritize taking care of yourself while engaging in summer fanfare. Remember to protect your skin and stay hydrated. Keep healthy and safe while making the most of longer days and sunny skies.

For questions about coverage or wellness support, visit **BCBSIL Resources** and see how your benefits can keep you thriving in every season.

SOURCES: *Center for Disease Control*, *SkinCancer.org*, *American Medical Association*, *National Cancer Institute*, *UCLA Health*

Share this issue with your colleagues so they too can enjoy the healthy outdoors this summer!