



# SKIN CANCER PREVENTION

## USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS FROM THE FIELDS OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE AND DERMATOLOGY

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## PREFACE

This handbook is to help parents understand and address important issues when talking with their children about how to reduce the potential for developing skin cancer. Much of what is covered is based on large bodies of evidence based literature from the scientific fields of medicine, psychology, and communication as well as the innovative research conducted at the Prevention Research Center for the last 15 years. This handbook offers practical advice for opening communication channels with young individuals and strengthening communication between parents and their children.

As with any project, there are people whose efforts made this possible. Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the numerous parents who gave their valuable time and advice. We would also like to thank all of the children that took the time out to help. Without their insights, there would be no book. Finally, we would like to thank our colleagues for their suggestions and the individuals who provided us with updated statistics and information.



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# INTRODUCTION

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer. It affects individuals of all ages, but is especially problematic for young individuals because they tend to be outside in sunlight more than adults. The causes of skin cancer vary, but there is substantial evidence that suggests that the primary cause is due to exposure to ultraviolet rays that come from sun or artificial light exposure. Information on how to protect yourself and your family from these rays can perhaps save someone's life.



## Here are seven facts to consider:

**FACT 1:** One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.

**FACT 2:** A sunburn at any time in your life will increase the risk of skin cancer. A sunburn is a sign of DNA damage in skin cells that may result in cancer formation. Sunburns hurt because the body is sending blood to the affected area to remove the dying and DNA damaged cells.

**FACT 3:** Tanned skin and freckles are other signs of sun damage. Later signs of sun damage include sun spots, wrinkles, thin skin, and other features of premature aging.

**FACT 4:** Skin cancer can spread to other parts of the body. People do die from skin cancer.

**FACT 5:** Melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer, is now the most common form of cancer for young adults 25-29 years old and the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults 15-29 years old.

**FACT 6:** Skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers as up to 90 percent of these cancers are caused by ultraviolet (UV) exposure from the sun or tanning beds.

**FACT 7:** You can easily prevent sunburns and other forms of skin damage (e.g. tans, wrinkles, sun spots) that may result in skin cancer. This handbook will show you how.

Results from a study conducted by the American Academy of Dermatology on Child Sun Exposure show that 43 percent of sixth and seventh graders say they lay out in the sun, and 63 percent of this age group believe they look better when they have a tan, These potentially dangerous views increase as the children become teenagers.