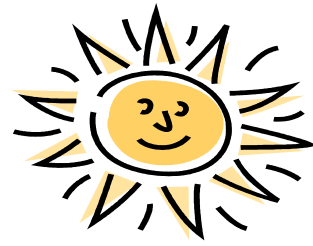


Keeping kids safe in the New Mexico sun



Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in New Mexico and in the U.S. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure from the sun during childhood and adolescence is a key risk factor for developing this disease.

Preventing skin cancer starts early in life!

More than 50% of a person's lifetime UV exposure occurs by the age of 18. *Adopting sun safety behaviors during childhood and adolescence* is currently the best method for preventing skin cancer. Instilling good sun safety habits in young children can prevent skin cancer later in life!

Here are some things you can do to protect your kids:

- * Keep them out of the sun between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest. It's important to be protected even on cloudy days. Clouds don't filter out all UV rays and they may give a false sense of protection. Some of the most serious sunburns happen when the sky is overcast. If your kids must be outside, remind them to seek shade under trees, beach umbrellas and tents.
- * Provide them with a sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Choose a sunscreen that provides protection against both UVA and UVB rays. Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every 2 hours and more often after swimming or exercise.
- * Make sure your kids wear sunglasses! It's the best way to protect the delicate skin around your children's eyes.
- * Provide them with protective clothing such as long sleeves and pants. And, since 80% of skin cancers occur on the head and neck, wearing a wide-brimmed hat is great way to shade their face, ears, scalp and neck from the sun's rays.



- * Babies under six months old should always be kept out of the sun

Remember to be sun safe *everyday!*

Know your risks for skin cancer

Anyone can get skin cancer, but your risk (and your child's) risk is higher if you have experienced any of the following:

- One or more severe, blistering sunburns
- A large number of moles on your skin
- A family or personal history of skin cancer
- Fair skin and light colored hair and eyes

It's never too early to teach your children about sun protection! Set a good example for your children by making sun safety part of your family's daily routine - just like buckling up in the car or brushing teeth!

