



Reduce your risk of Skin Cancer

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The sun's rays, which are called ultraviolet A and ultraviolet B rays (UVA and UVB rays) damage your skin. This leads to early wrinkles, skin cancer and other skin problems. Being in the sun often over time, even if you don't burn, can lead to skin cancer. A tan is the body's desperate attempt to protect itself from the sun's harmful rays.

To protect your skin and reduce risk of skin cancer, follow "Safe-sun guidelines"

Avoid Sun

Avoid sun when it is strongest at the middle of the day, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Use sunscreen.

Use a sunscreen or sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, even on cloudy days. Apply sunscreen on about 30 minutes before you go into the sun. Put more sunscreen on if you are sweating or swimming

Cover up your skin

A wide-brimmed hat will help protect your face, neck, and ears from the sun. Baseball caps don't protect the back of your neck and the tops of your ears. Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from the sun.

Avoid tanning booths

Tanning booths damage your skin just like real sunlight does

It's a good idea to check your skin once a month for signs of skin cancer, such as moles. Try doing your skin check on the same date every month. Pick a day that you can remember, like the date of your birthday or the day you pay bills.

Stand in front of a full-length mirror and use a hand-held mirror to check every inch of your skin, including the bottoms of your feet and the top of your head. Have someone help you check the top of your head. Try using a blow-dryer set on low speed to move your hair.

Look for any change in a mole or the appearance of a new mole. Any moles that appear after age 30 should be watched carefully and shown to your doctor.

The "**ABCDE**" rule can help you look for signs of skin cancer. When looking at moles on your skin, look for the following:

- *Asymmetry*: When both sides of a mole don't look the same.
- *Border*: The edges of a mole are blurry or jagged.
- *Color*: The color of a mole changes
- *Diameter*: When a mole is larger than one fourth inch in diameter (about the size of a pencil eraser).
- *Elevation*: When a mole is raised above the skin and has a rough surface.



You should also watch for these skin changes:

- A mole that bleeds
- A mole that grows fast
- A scaly or crusted growth on the skin
- A sore that won't heal
- A mole that itches
- A place on your skin that feels rough like sandpaper

If you notice a mole that has changed, or if you have a new mole that doesn't look like your other moles, visit your doctor. The American Cancer Society recommends that if you are between 20- and 39-years-old, you should have a skin exam by your family doctor every three years, and once a year from age 40 on. If your family doctor finds something of concern, he or she will order diagnostic tests to rule out, or identify skin cancer

Skin cancer can be treated successfully if it is treated early

*References: American Academy of Family Physicians
American Cancer Society*

-- Dr. Gupta's family medicine practice is located at the St. Vincent Physician Network office at 12708 E. 116th Street, Fishers, Indiana. To make an appointment, please call 317.415.5800.

--St. Vincent Physician Network offers 23 convenient locations throughout central Indiana. To find a St. Vincent Physician Network office near you, call 317.356.CARE or visit us online at physiciannetwork.stvincent.org.