

Don't Get Burned!

The embarrassing swimsuit lines may fade, but the damage caused by a severe sunburn can be irreversible. Follow these rules to protect yourself.

By JESSICA PRESS



Sevin Hagan, 16

Growing up

in Florida, Sevin Hagan, 16, spent most weekends at the beach. Then one day her doctor tested a wart-like bump on her arm, leading to a shocking diagnosis: She had **melanoma**, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

Sevin was lucky. Doctors removed her cancer early enough that she's now in **remission**, but many aren't as fortunate. Melanoma kills one person every hour of every day in the U.S., and every year, more than 5 million people are diagnosed with **basal cell carcinoma** or **squamous cell carcinoma**, the other types of skin cancer.

The good news? While there are risk factors that are out of your control (like your genetics and family history), you *do* have power over how much sun you get. "The exposure you build up as a teen doesn't go away," says surgical **oncologist** Dr. Vernon K. Sondak. So use this guide to stay safe in the sun this summer—and beyond.

Just one blistering sunburn can double your chances of developing melanoma later in life.

STATISTIC SOURCE: MELANOMA RESEARCH FOUNDATION
CORRINA HOLZNER/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES (PODDY); COURTESY OF FAMILY (SEVIN HAGAN)



RULE 1

WEAR SUNSCREEN—ALWAYS!

Knowing how to decode the label will help you pick the right sunscreen *and* use it correctly.

Sun Protection Factor (SPF): This refers to how much **UV radiation** (the damaging part of sunlight) it takes to burn your unprotected skin versus protected skin.

MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS

Don't ignore these! Some brands recommend you reapply after 40 minutes; others say 80. Do it even sooner if you're sweating a lot or getting wet.

TO APPLY: Use no less than 2 tablespoons (the size of a Ping Pong ball) all over, including armpits and bottoms of feet!



30 It's the minimum **SPF** number doctors recommend. While a bigger number might seem like better protection, there's no need to buy sunscreen with SPF 100. The most important thing is that you follow the instructions and reapply as directed.

BROAD SPECTRUM It's essential that the label says this. It means that it protects against both **UVA** rays, which age your skin, and **UVB** rays, which cause burns.

WATER-RESISTANT If water-resistant sunscreen makes you itchy or uncomfortable, try a regular one, which some people find easier on their skin. No matter which type you use, reapply often, especially after swimming.



RULE 3

SEPARATE FACT FROM FICTION.

BE HONEST: Have you told yourself these lies?

"It's just a healthy glow." LIE

Anytime your skin changes color because of sun or a tanning bed (even a little bit!), it's a sign of sun damage, which can lead to premature wrinkles and skin cancer.

"It's better to get a base tan." LIE

Hitting the tanning bed to prep for your vacation? Don't do it! Using a tanning bed before age 30 increases your risk of developing melanoma by 75 percent.

"I don't need sunscreen—it's cloudy." LIE

UVB radiation is more intense in summer, but UVA radiation is present in equal amounts all year. It can penetrate clouds, mist, fog, and glass to damage your skin.

RULE 4

KNOW THE DANGER ZONE.

The sun is strongest between **10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** Can't stay indoors that whole time? Do your best to seek shade when you can.



RULE 5

SCHEDULE MONTHLY SELF-EXAMS.

Put "skin check" as a repeating event on your phone. This way you'll learn what's normal for your body and can spot any changes that occur. (Go to scholastic.com/choices for a self-check guide.)

RULE 2

DON'T RELY ONLY ON SPF . . .

Yes, it will help protect exposed skin, but other precautions are just as important. Add these must-have items to your beach bag.



Sunglasses: Make sure to purchase shades that cover your whole eye area and offer protection from both UVA and UVB rays. They should have a label that says they block 99 percent to 100 percent of UV rays.

Hat: The bigger the brim, the better! Scalp melanomas tend to be more aggressive, possibly because they're often caught late. They account for 10 percent of melanoma deaths.



Cover-Ups: Wear a long-sleeve rash guard and board shorts whenever you go to the beach; labels should say that they're made of a UV-protective fabric.

TEEN SURVIVOR



"Girls aren't the only ones at risk."

—Graham, 13, Minnesota

"When I was 9, I noticed a mole on my arm that looked like a blood blister. After about a month of tests, my doctor found out it was melanoma. I'm doing great since my surgery, but I want others to know that even though there's a lot of focus on girls and tanning, guys are at risk too. We all need to wear sunscreen and pay attention to our skin."

IN GREEN: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (PING PONG BALL); MELANOMA: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (SUNGLASSES); BOY: SHEVCHUK / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (HAT); BOARD SHORTS: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (SHORT TRUNKS); TRACY CALABRANO (GRAHAM)

THE "GET IT DOUBLE-CHECKED!" LIST

These red flags are signs to call your doctor ASAP:

■ A mole or freckle that is rapidly changing or growing, or develops a black spot or lump in it

■ A wart-like bump that won't go away, or that goes away and comes back

■ A mole that bleeds, oozes, itches, or hurts

■ A mole or freckle that is unlike any other—it's darker, or has an uneven color

■ A new or changing mole on a body part that isn't typically exposed to the sun

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