

Staying Sun Safe Is as  
Easy as 1-2-3

By: Creed King

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Florida State University  
School  
Tallahassee, Florida

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Skin cancer is not pretty. If you could see my dad's back, you would agree. Right in the middle is a pink scar shaped just like a fossilized cockroach. Was he attacked by a rabid dog, or branded like a cow? No, and no. It's all that is left after the doctor took a big scoop of skin to remove a discolored and cancerous mole.

My grandfather has skin cancer, too.

Every time we visit him, he has tiny circle Band-Aids all over his nose. He has even had a part of his ear taken off. You guessed it—it's all because of skin cancer.

I am telling you this not only because skin cancer is gross and ugly, but also because skin cancer can be deadly. It is important for you to know the horrors of skin cancer so that you can protect yourself from getting it.

How do you get skin cancer? The number one cause is the sun. And what's the number one reason people come to Florida?

Sunshine. Here in the Sunshine State, there are some cities that claim to get sunshine almost every day of the year. That sounds awesome until you realize that the sun's sizzling

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ultraviolet rays make you look older quicker, and even worse, it causes eye damage, immune system suppression, and cancer. Global warming isn't helping either. In fact, it's on the sun's team. As our earth heats up, the ozone layer, which used to be a natural barrier against ultraviolet rays, gets thinner.

Thankfully, there are several things you can do to stay safe and prevent skin cancer. The easiest way to protect yourself is to slather on 30 SPF or higher sunscreen all over your body. You have to do this more than once a day. Some dermatologists recommend reapplying sunscreen every two hours.

Another helpful way to avoid sun exposure is to wear a hat or a sun shirt. I have to admit that wearing a sun shirt while swimming is not very comfortable, but my mom makes me. Plus, after seeing my dad's back and my grandpa's nose and ear, I'll do whatever it takes to be sun safe.

Finally, having a sun shade on our playground at the Florida State University School in Tallahassee would make it easy for my friends and I to play safe. Recess is always during

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the hottest part of the day and seriously, I can feel those deadly rays beating down on my skin. Our teachers get just as hot! They huddle underneath one of the few trees that provides shade like mice in a tiny cage at the pet store.

Skin cancer is not a laughing matter, but if you lather up, cover up, and play in the shade, staying sun safe is as easy as 1-2-3.