

Beware The Winter Sun!

For serious athletes, worry over injury is par for the course. While most wouldn't miss out on their warm-ups to prevent being harmed at play, according to dermatologists, proper sun care is often the last thing on an athlete's mind.

"The effects of the sun on an athlete's skin can be as hazardous as any sport injury," says Joshua L. Fox, M.D., F.A.A.D., founder and director of Advanced Dermatology and a spokesperson for the American Academy of Dermatology Skin Faculty. Outdoor athletes need to make skin cancer prevention a regular part of their workout repertoire," adds Dr. Fox.

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers and it accounts for nearly half of all cancers in the United States. Melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer and accounts for about 8,000 to almost 11,000 deaths each year. Serious recreational and elite athletes are at higher risk than the general public for getting skin cancer because of the amount of time they spend in the sun, because they often don't wear proper protective clothing, because of constant sweating which reduces the effect of sunscreen and because of their history of excessive skin exposure.

"Among the leading causes of skin cancer is unprotected and excessive exposure to UV radiation," says Dr. Fox. "This means that most cases of skin cancer are preventable. It is important that serious athletes and all those who will participate in outdoor athletic activities understand that there are things they can do to help them lessen the risk of getting skin cancer."

Protecting skin from the sun

Although common sense can go a long way in helping athletes prevent skin cancer, some rules are not so straightforward. The American Cancer Society advises athletes to plan outdoor workouts for before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m., avoiding the time when the sun's rays are most intense. Protective clothing to guard as much skin as possible such as a hat that shades face, ears and neck should be worn when out playing sports in the sun. Athletes especially should wear sunglasses with 99% to 100% UV absorption to provide optimal protection for the eyes and the surrounding skin.

Athletes should also choose a sunscreen wisely. Sun protection factor (SPF) measures the length of time a product protects against skin burning from ultraviolet radiation, compared to how long the skin takes to burn without protection. If it takes 20 minutes without protection to begin burning, using an SPF 15 sunscreen protects from the burning 15 times longer - - about 5 hours. Dr. Fox recommends using a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.

Athletes should also understand the more hazy rules of skin care. Those participating in outdoor sports this winter should:

- 1) Know the difference between UVA and UVB rays. UVA is present all day and every day of the year. Penetrating deep into skin

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The rising incidence of melanoma is often the result of life style factors rather than genetics. According to the American Cancer Society, most of the more than 1 million cases of nonmelanoma skin cancer diagnosed yearly in the United States are sun-related.

layers, UVA is more often linked with wrinkling than skin cancer. The latest studies, however, show that UVA not only increases the cancer-causing effects of UVB rays but also may directly cause some skin cancers, including melanomas. The UVA rays are at

about the same strength all day long. The sun's damaging UVA rays can reflect back from sand, snow or white concrete. Most of the sun's rays can come through the clouds on an overcast day, making it important to use sun protection even on cloudy days.

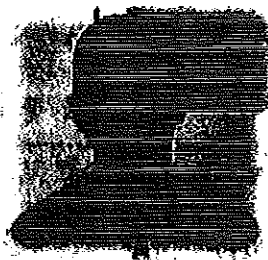
UVB rays are considered the main cause of basal and squamous cell carcinomas, the most common types of skin cancers -- as well as a significant cause of melanoma. These rays vary with weather conditions and are more intense at midday. The SPF in sunscreens blocks UVB rays. "However, sunscreens that say 'broad-spectrum' can protect the skin from the effects of both of these harmful types of rays," says Dr. Fox.

2) With activities at high altitude like mountain climbing and skiing comes a greater risk of skin damage. For these activities, Dr. Fox recommends sunscreens that come with a physical block, like titanium or zinc oxide. Water acts as a lens, allowing the sun to penetrate skin more deeply. When looking for sunscreens for water sports, athletes should not confuse waterproof with water-resistant. A waterproof sunscreen substantively provides protection for at

least 80 minutes when swimming or sweating, while a water resistant product provides protection for only 40 minutes while swimming or sweating. Anyone expecting to sweat a lot during outdoor exercise may want to choose one of these products.

3) Sunscreen should be applied liberally and to all exposed body parts at least 30 minutes before going out in the sun and then reapplied every two hours and after swimming or sweating. Last year's sunscreens should be thrown out since some ingredients degrade and lose their effectiveness. To cover an adult body requires approximately 1 oz. Therefore an 8oz container should last for 8 applications not the entire summer.

According to Dr. Fox, choosing the appropriate clothing and sunscreen for the length of time an athlete expects to be in the sun is key. "Selecting the right SPF factor, remembering to reapply sunscreen at appropriate intervals and treating cloudy days just as one would sunny days can all go a long way towards helping prevent skin damage from the sun and skin cancer." ■



Bio: Joshua L. Fox, M.D., F.A.A.D.

Joshua L. Fox, M.D., is a leading authority in the field of dermatology with an expertise in skin cancer, cosmetic surgery, and laser procedures. As an official spokesperson for the American Academy of Dermatology and the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, Dr. Fox has been an expert resource on dermatologic topics for numerous television networks, including ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC and Telemundo, talk shows, radio stations, newspapers and magazines. Dr. Fox has served on the board of the National Rosacea Foundation and has done clinical trials in both medical and laser therapy in rosacea.

He has received multiple research and clinical awards, including recognition from Top Doctors, Who's Who, Journal of Dermatologic Surgery and Oncology, Community Service Award from the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, the prestigious Husic Award, as well as certificates of recognition for service from multiple hospitals and civic, educational and community organizations. Dr. Fox has authored and presented papers of his research on lasers, cosmetic procedures, stretch marks, scars, skin cancer, bug bites, photosensitivity and various rashes.

As founder and director of Advanced Dermatology and The Center for Laser and Cosmetic Surgery, Dr. Fox and associates have expanded the practice to one of the largest in dermatology, laser and cosmetic surgery, with more lasers than any hospital or dermatology practice on the eastern coast. Dr. Fox is a graduate of the New York University Medical Center of Skin and Cancer and has been on the advisory board of the Psoriasis Foundation and National Rosacea Foundation, among others. He has also been a fellow of many societies, including the International Academy of Cosmetic Surgery, International Academy of Cosmetic Dermatology and the Society for Investigative Dermatology. Dr. Fox is the founder of the AAD Melanoma/Skin Cancer Prevention Program in Queens, New York (since 1987). Dr. Fox has been Chief of Dermatology of several major teaching hospitals, including Mt. Sinai Hospital of Queens and Jamaica Medical Center, and is currently on the staff of ten NY area hospitals. Dr. Fox and Advanced Dermatology and The Center for Laser & Cosmetic Surgery have been used as a resource center educating dermatologists, laser surgeons and cosmetic surgeons and others about lasers, cancer and cosmetic surgery.

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