Reducing Your Risk of Skin Cancer

Dr. Mona Mofid, a Sharp Community Medical Group board certified dermatologist and Medical Director of The American Melanoma Foundation, answers frequently asked questions about sun damage and skin cancer.

Who is at risk for skin cancer?
Everyone is at risk, including people in all ethnic groups. The number of cases continues to grow. Twenty percent of Americans will develop some sort of skin cancer in their lifetime, and it has been estimated that this year one in 50 Americans will develop melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer.

Why do sunburns and tanning pose a threat?
If you get sunburned five or more times during your lifetime, your risk of skin cancer doubles. And bear in mind that 80 percent of lifetime sun damage occurs in childhood, so sun protection is especially important for children. Indoor tanning is also harmful. A single indoor UV tanning session increases the risk of melanoma by 20 percent and boosts the risk of squamous cell carcinoma by 67 percent.

What SPF strength sunscreen is best?
Choose a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30 and preferably 50 or higher. The higher the SPF, the longer it protects you. Water, humidity and sweating decrease the effectiveness of sunscreen.
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and numerous reapplications are necessary to get the intended benefit. For kids, apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before they go outside. Check the label to see how often you need to reapply.

**What is sun-protective/ultraviolet-light clothing?**
Sun-protective clothing uses fabric to protect your skin from the sun’s damaging ultraviolet A and B rays. Normal clothing doesn’t fully protect you. The fabric of protective clothing is rated according to an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) similar to SPF for sunscreen. Remember that you still need to wear sunscreen on uncovered areas of skin. Protective clothing has a variety of advantages over sunscreen. Among them: It doesn’t wash off or need to be reapplied, it’s more reliable in protecting against sunburns, and it reduces the need for expensive sunscreens.

**What is eye protection factor?**
Eye protection factor (EPF) is a rating for non-prescription sunglasses intended to help people compare how well different lenses protect the eyes from solar radiation. The EPF is based on frame coverage and UV, blue light and infrared protection.

**How often should I see a doctor about my skin?**
Dr. Mofid recommends a skin cancer-related checkup and counseling about sun exposure as part of any health examination. This can generally be performed by your primary care physician. You should also be aware of your skin and contact your doctor about any bleeding spots or anything that is new or changing.

At Sharp Community Medical Group, our practitioners make utilization management decisions based only on appropriateness of care and service and existence of coverage. Practitioners and individuals who conduct utilization review are not rewarded for denials of coverage, and there are no financial incentives for utilization management decision makers to encourage decisions resulting in underutilization.
Did you know that 82 percent of American adults take at least one medication and 29 percent take five or more? Each year more than 700,000 emergency room visits and 120,000 hospitalizations are caused by adverse drug effects – a broad term referring to unwanted, uncomfortable, or dangerous effects that taking multiple medications can cause.

According to Debi Reissman, PharmD., Director of Pharmacy, Sharp Community Medical Group, “Many of these medication events can be prevented if safe medication practices are followed. To help prevent medication mishaps, follow these steps and be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist any time you have questions about your medications,” Dr. Reissman said.

- Keep a list of all medications you are taking, including eye drops, inhalers, creams and patches, and non-prescription medications such as herals, vitamins and supplements. Keep this list with you at all times. Make sure you know what each medicine is for and how you should be taking it. If you aren't sure, ask your doctor. Use a medication log or chart to help you.
- Make sure each of your doctors is aware of all the medicines you are taking, and tell your doctors if you stop taking any medicines for any reason.
- Keep your medications in a locked cabinet away from children and pets.
- Let your pharmacist know if you have trouble opening your prescription bottles or if your pills look different than you expected.
- Tell your doctor if you cannot afford a medication. A less expensive option may be available.

Anytime you get a new medication, ask the following questions:
- What is the medication for?
- How and when should it be taken?
- Does this medication replace any other medications I am taking?
- What side effects should I expect and what should I do if I have side effects?

Some prescriptions have known side effects or symptoms that patients may experience after taking the medication that are a natural consequence of the substance being introduced into the body. Most of these side effects are harmless and require no treatment, but Dr. Reissman warns that “side effects are more common or can be worse in adults 65 and older. These include dizziness with the chance of falling, blurry vision, bladder control problems, memory loss and worsening of heart disease.”
How to Choose the Best DIET FOR YOU
Although going on a diet usually implies losing weight as a goal, in fact, diets can have a variety of other objectives, including controlling or preventing high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.

Choosing a diet that aligns with your goals, and checking in with your doctor to make sure there’s no downside to your plan, can help you be successful. Here are some diets that are highly rated, and some other approaches that you might want to think twice about.

**Some That the Experts Like**

**DASH Diet** Choose the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) if your goal is to prevent hypertension or lower your blood pressure. It can also help reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, stroke and diabetes. The DASH diet, which is based on research sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, was recently rated the number one all-around diet for better health by *U.S. News and World Report*.

Followers of the DASH diet eat whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low- or no-fat milk and dairy products, lean meat, poultry, fish, nuts, seeds, beans, and no more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day.

**TLC Diet** The TLC (Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes) diet was developed by the National Institutes of Health, and its main goal is improving cardiovascular health by lowering your LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol level. It emphasizes reducing your intake of saturated fat and dietary cholesterol. People on the TLC diet eat lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, fish, and poultry with the skin removed.

**MAYO Clinic Diet** This diet is designed to help you shed pounds, but it’s also heart-healthy and a good approach to preventing or controlling diabetes. The focus is on breaking bad eating habits and acquiring healthy ones, and you’ll eat from all food groups. The diet includes lots of fruits and veggies, whole grains, and healthy fats, along with watching portion sizes and servings.

**Mediterranean Diet** The Mediterranean diet includes copious amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables, small amounts of red meat and nuts, fish, shellfish, olive or canola oil, herbs and spices instead of salt, and moderate amounts of red wine.

Follow this diet if your goal is to lose weight and prevent diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

**Some That May Be Questionable**

**Paleo Diet** This approach involves eating like your Paleolithic ancestors did. This means sticking to foods that can be hunted or gathered, such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables, roots, and berries. You’ll eliminate all grains, dairy, and legumes, as well as added sugar and salt. Proponents say the Paleo diet can help you lose weight, prevent diabetes, and lower your blood pressure.

However, be aware that while the Paleo plan’s emphasis on produce and lean protein can have positive results, avoiding whole grains, legumes and dairy may deprive you of important vitamins and minerals. Critics also argue that Paleo eaters can get too much fat and protein and not enough carbohydrates.

**Juice Cleansing** Doing a juice fast or cleanse of some kind is touted by proponents as a quick way to lose some weight and a way to “detox” the body. Such juice cleanses may be as simple as consuming only water and fresh-squeezed fruit and vegetable juices for a few days, or they be more elaborate, as with the Master Cleanse.

The only sustenance allowed while on the Master Cleanse/Lemonade Diet is a mixture of lemon juice, maple syrup, cayenne pepper and water. It also calls for a nightly dose of an herbal laxative.

If weight loss occurs in the short term, it’s due to the laxative effect of the cleanse ingredients and the nightly laxative, which cause a loss of water weight and muscle tissue. What’s more, regular use of laxatives can cause dehydration and electrolyte imbalances.

Some experts argue there are health benefits to periodic short fasts, but few support fasting as a route to healthy, long-term weight loss. And there is debate about the value of “detoxing” the body.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends avoiding cleanses and other diets that:

- Eliminate entire food groups.
- Restrict you to eating the same food over and over.
- Suggest that eating a specific combination of foods is the key to health or weight loss.

**Recipe: Chicken and Spanish Rice**

Here’s a recipe consistent with the DASH diet.

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1 cup chopped onions
- ¾ cup green peppers
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil
- 1 8-oz. can tomato sauce*
- 1 tsp. chopped parsley
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- 1½ tsp. minced garlic
- 5 cups cooked brown rice (cooked in unsalted water)
- 3½ cups chicken breasts, cooked, skin and bone removed, and diced

* To reduce sodium, use one 4-oz. can of low-sodium tomato sauce and one 4-oz. can of regular tomato sauce. New sodium content for each serving is 215 mg.

**DIRECTIONS**

In a large skillet, sauté onions and green peppers in oil for 5 minutes on medium heat. Add tomato sauce and spices. Heat through. Add cooked rice and chicken. Heat through.

**PER SERVING**

Serves 5; serving size is 1½ cups.

**EACH SERVING PROVIDES:**

- Calories: 428
- Total Fat: 8 g
- Saturated Fat: 2 g
- Cholesterol: 80 mg
- Sodium: 341 mg
- Protein: 35 g
- Carbohydrate: 52 g
- Fiber: 8 g
Need Help with Your Personal Health Goals?

Because your doctor is a member of Sharp Community Medical Group (SCMG), you may benefit from the care coordination services described below. The programs are provided by SCMG at no charge to patients who qualify for these programs.

SCMG has a comprehensive Ambulatory Case Management department that includes Complex/Transplant Case Management and Disease Management teams. Both teams may be significant resources for you. Features of both programs are listed below.

**Complex Case Management Program**
This program provides comprehensive care management for members with complex medical conditions requiring long-term, ongoing management. Patients in this program typically have one or more of these characteristics:
- Wellness coaching through patient engagement
- High-cost, high-risk treatment
- Solid organ and stem cell transplants (except corneal and skin)
- New treatments using cutting-edge technology
- Treatment under clinical trial
- Management of members treated out of area requiring close coordination and co-management of care and services with the health plan
- Use of specialized durable medical equipment
- Experimental/investigational treatments

**Case Management and Resource Education (CARE) Program**
The CARE Program involves:
- Connecting physicians and members to community social service support services
- Providing federal, state and community resources
- Providing member educational materials
- Linking members to health plan disease management programs

**Disease Management Program**
The Disease Management Program helps patients better manage chronic conditions. The diseases covered include diabetes, heart failure, COPD, asthma, coronary artery disease, and chronic kidney disease. The program highlights are:
- Disease-specific telephonic coaching by registered nurse disease case managers to help improve self-management skills
- Mailing of personalized patient education materials
- Referrals for diabetes education and testing supplies
- Information about community and Internet resources
- Coordination of care plan and goals between the patient, the disease management coach, and the primary care physician

**GIVE US A CALL**
If you think you would benefit from participating in the Complex Case Management or Disease Management programs, or would like to learn about other Ambulatory Case Management programs that may benefit you, please call 858-499-3040 and choose option 8.

FollowMyHealth is a free health management tool provided by Sharp Community Medical Group. It provides anytime, anywhere access to your personal health information so you can manage your health care from your computer, tablet or smartphone. With FollowMyHealth you can schedule appointments, view lab results, send secure messages to your doctor’s office, and more.

If you already have a FollowMyHealth account, you do not need to do a thing. When you log in, you may notice things look a little different this year, but you still have all the same tools as before.

Many Sharp Community Medical Group physicians use FollowMyHealth, and more are implementing the tool every month. Visit www.scmg.org/followmyhealth to view a complete list of participating SCMG doctors.
Team Up with Your Doctor to Get the Care You Need – and Deserve!

According to a recent study released by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 21 percent of Internet users say they have recently researched a particular doctor or medical group. The Internet continues to be a popular resource to search, compare and connect with physicians and hospitals that best meet patients’ medical needs. Now more than ever, consumers are empowered with key information regarding patient satisfaction, safety, and treatment outcomes. To gather this data, doctors are graded on whether patients take advantage of preventive care and screenings, get needed tests and vaccines, take their medications, and engage in managing any chronic diseases. This data is used more and more by consumers to pick the doctors and medical groups where they want to receive care.

“Avoiding a test ordered by your doctor, skipping a recommended vaccine, not taking your medication, or neglecting to follow your doctor’s medical advice keeps you from being your healthiest and can also reflect poorly on your doctor,” says Debi Reissman, PharmD., Director of Pharmacy, Sharp Community Medical Group. Dr. Reissman goes on to say, “Patients need to team up with their doctor and follow their instructions to get the care they deserve. After all, that is why you go to the doctor.”

Six things to keep in mind regarding your doctor visits:

1. See your doctor at least once a year to determine what tests and vaccines you need.
2. Get any laboratory tests, x-rays or other ordered services in a timely manner.
3. If you have diabetes or high blood pressure, make sure you know your goal numbers and your current scores. See your doctor every two to three months until you reach your goal and then twice a year to stay at that goal.
4. Take any prescribed medications as directed by your doctor. Alert your doctor if you have trouble taking or affording your medications.
5. Use your prescription drug benefit for all your prescription needs. Prescriptions filled outside of your drug benefit (paying cash, going to the Veterans Administration or taking samples) are not recorded in your prescription record, which increases the chance of drug interactions.
6. Complete any surveys sent to you about your doctor’s care so they know how they are doing.

Together you and your doctor can become a winning team to achieve and maintain excellent health.

We Can Help You Connect with Your Doctor

If you need assistance creating the relationship with your doctor as described here, please contact our Customer Service department.

**Customer Service**

Members can contact Sharp Community Medical Group for questions regarding:

- referrals
- provider access assistance
- eligibility
- claims
- benefit provision guidelines or criteria
- perceived quality concerns
- how to voice a complaint
- how to find contracted providers’ names and addresses in order to obtain health care services

Call our Customer Service Department at **858-499-2550** during our expanded business hours:
7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Toll-Free outside of the 858 area code: **877-518-SCM** (7264).
TTY: **711**.
Dentists Disagree on How to Brush Your Teeth

Do you Scrub, use the Fones, or employ the Modified Bass technique? These aren’t military drills or fishermen’s knots—they’re different ways to brush your teeth. Though most people do it at least twice every day, there’s no universal consensus on which of those methods is best, a new study shows. Nor do dental experts and toothbrush companies agree on how often or how long to use the bristle.

But evidence strongly supports the idea that brushing daily remains key to good oral health. And advanced gum disease may even increase your risk for other health problems, like heart disease and diabetes.

While worldwide experts differ, the American Dental Association (ADA) currently recommends that you:

- Brush twice per day with a soft-bristled brush.
- Use an ADA-approved fluoride toothpaste.
- Hold the toothbrush at a 45-degree angle to your gums.
- Gently move it back and forth in strokes the length of one tooth.
- Brush outer, inside, and chewing surfaces of all teeth.
- Tilt the brush vertically and make several small up-and-down strokes on the back of your front teeth.
- Brush your tongue to banish bacteria and bad breath.

Aim for at least three minutes of brushing—about the length of one song on your morning radio station.

If you have questions about the best brush or technique for your mouth shape and tooth position, check with your dentist or hygienist. And to keep your teeth and gums healthy, you should also floss daily, eat a healthy, balanced diet, and get regular cleanings and dental exams.

Understanding How Medicare Works

If you’re turning 65, or you’re still working and planning to retire soon, it’s time to start thinking about Medicare and your options. Attend this free educational meeting where an expert from Sharp will explain how Medicare works in clear, easy-to-understand language. You’ll learn about Medicare Parts A and B, special enrollment requirements if you start using Medicare after age 65, and the difference between Medicare Advantage and Medicare Supplement Insurance plans. There will be plenty of time for questions, too.

- 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Wednesdays, May 6; June 10; July 8; and Tuesday, August 11
- Sharp HealthCare Auditorium, 8695 Spectrum Center Blvd., San Diego, CA 92123

Register at 1-800-82-SHARP (1-800-827-4277) or www.sharp.com/medicare.