

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Sunscreen

As everyone starts to enjoy the summer weather, certain precautions are often forgotten when it comes to spending time in the sun. Whether it is having a Fourth of July BBQ, relaxing by the pool, or working in the yard, the use of sunscreen is very important in maintaining healthy skin and avoiding the potential of skin cancer. Most people are uninformed of the sun's damaging rays, choosing the right sun protectant, and the proper usage of that product.

Sunscreens are helpful in preventing the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation, UVA and UVB rays, from reaching the skin where they cause damage, premature aging, and an increased risk of skin cancer. UVB is a shortwave ray that is the main cause of sunburn, damaging the most superficial epidermal layer. It plays a key role in the development of skin cancer. UVA is a long-wave ray causing wrinkling, leathery, sagging and other aging effects, penetrating the skin more deeply. It is also believed to contribute to and may even initiate the development of skin cancers.

The most confusing problem in picking out a sunscreen is choosing what SPF will give you the right amount of protection. SPF, Sun Protection Factor, is the measure of the sunscreen's ability to prevent UVB from damaging the skin. If it takes 20 minutes for unprotected skin to start turning red, then SPF 15 should ideally prevent reddening 15 times longer, or about 5 hours. SPF 15 filters out about 93 percent of all incoming UVB rays, SPF 30 keeps out 97 percent and SPF 50 keeps out 98 percent. Although those are small increases in protection, it could make all the difference if you are light sensitive or have a history of skin cancer. There are no sunscreens with the potential to block all UV rays. Regardless of the strength, it must be reapplied about every two hours. Even if your skin is not turning red, you could still be receiving damage from UVA rays.

It is recommended to use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that will offer protection from both UVA and UVB rays. There are lotions and moisturizers that contain at least SPF 15, which is good if you plan on only spending a few minutes here and there out in the sun. If you plan on spending a longer amount of time, then something stronger might be helpful. You should apply about one ounce, or a shot glass full, of sunscreen at least 30 minutes before sun exposure. This will allow time for the ingredients to bind to the skin and work appropriately. Reapplication is the most important step in ensuring decreased sun exposure during prolonged time outside. The use of water-resistant products is good for hot days, whether you are swimming or sweating, and should be immediately reapplied after drying off.

Be sure to keep this in mind next time you find yourself down the sunscreen aisle. Prevention is crucial in decreasing your chances of skin cancer. Having sunburn is no fun when trying to enjoy the summer sun.

Resources:

Skin Cancer Foundation. Sunscreens Explained [Web page]. <<http://www.skincancer.org/prevention/sun-protection/sunscreen/sunscreens-explained>> Accessed June 18, 2015.

Skin Cancer Foundation. Understanding UVA and UVB [Web page]. <<http://www.skincancer.org/prevention/uva-and-uvb/understanding-uva-and-uvb>> Accessed June 18, 2015.

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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