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Sun Protection for Athletes



Depending on your sport, athletes can spend many hours in the mid-day sun, practicing or competing. Without proper sun protection, you are not only increasing your risk of sunburn, which can hamper your ability to compete, but also increasing your risk of developing skin cancer in the future. Preventing overexposure to the sun is one of the highly preventable steps athletes and everyone can take to reduce the risk of skin cancer.

Follow these tips to protect your skin when outdoors practicing or competing:

- **Seek shade.** The sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. If your shadow appears to be shorter than you are, the sun's rays are strongest and you should seek shade.
- Try to schedule activities to avoid these peak sun hours. Encourage your coaches to schedule practices and games early in the day or later in the afternoon, when possible.
- **Wear protective clothing**, such as a lightweight, long-sleeved shirt and pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses, where possible.
- Most clothing absorbs or reflects some UV rays. However, light-colored and loose-knit fabrics, as well as wet clothes that cling to the skin, do not offer much sun protection. In general, the tighter the weave of the fabric and the darker the fabric color, the more UV protection clothing offers.
- **Generously apply a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher to all exposed skin. "Broad spectrum" provides protection from both UVA and UVB rays.
- Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going outside so it has time to take effect.
- Reapply approximately every two hours, even on cloudy days, and after swimming or sweating.

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To find a free SPOTme® skin cancer screening in your area, visit SpotSkinCancer.org or call 888-462-DERM (3376)

- **Use extra caution near water, snow, and sand** because they reflect and intensify the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase the chance of sunburn.
 - Winter and alpine athletes receive even more sun exposure, not only due to the reflection off the snow and ice, but because they are at a higher altitude.

It's important to remember that anyone can get skin cancer, regardless of skin color. It is estimated that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. When caught early, skin cancer is highly treatable.

Visit SpotSkinCancer.org to learn how to do a skin cancer self-exam and download the AAD's body mole map to document any suspicious spots.

If you notice a new spot or an existing spot that changes, itches or bleeds, make an appointment to see a board-certified dermatologist.

