

Too much sun can be a bad thing

By Janet Goodall

Your skin has many important jobs, such as protecting your body, helping to maintain your temperature, and generating vitamin D. Yet sometimes your skin doesn't get the care and protection it needs.



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While some sun exposure helps the body make vitamin D and improve your mood, more than a small amount can damage skin cells and lead to skin cancer. Consider these lesser known facts about skin cancer:

- It can happen at any age. Skin cancer rates have increased by 250 percent among American children and young adults in the last 40 years. Young adults, particularly young women, are more likely to get skin cancer than any other cancer.
- You may notice symptoms. Monitor your skin for large, uneven, discolored sores that grow rapidly or do not heal. Watch for swelling, spreading color, and a change in the surface texture.
- Your health history matters. Research shows a history of skin cancer, a weak immune system, radiation therapy, and HPV can increase your risk. Precancerous lesions, sunburns, and delicate skin are also risk factors.

- Any tanning is dangerous. Both artificial tanning and recreational suntanning deliver UVA and UVB radiation, which can damage cell DNA and lead to cancer. Living at high elevation and spending a lot of time outside also increase your risk.
- You can still enjoy the sun. Go outside early in the morning or in the evening, when the sun's rays are less intensive. Any time of day, wear protective clothing, a hat, sunglasses, and a "broad spectrum" sunscreen, SPF 30 or higher, that protect against both UVA and UVB rays.

Janet Goodall is a family nurse practitioner who sees patients at Barton Health.