

8 Sun Safety Tips for Your Summer Run

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Delays are longer and the sun is stronger and almost everyone spends more time outdoors. Unfortunately the sun's rays can cause damage to skin if not properly protected. The incidence of skin cancer is on the rise as reported cases of melanoma have climbed. Although most people are aware that ultraviolet radiation causes skin cancer, the tan-is-beautiful attitude still prevails and most think a tan is more attractive than pale skin. Ironically, this attitude can be even more prevalent among fitness enthusiasts than those house-bound couch potatoes.

Everyone who exercises outdoors should use a sunscreen. SPF is the sun protection factor and is a multiplier of the time it ordinarily takes for skin to burn. If you would burn in 20 minutes while unprotected, an SPF of 15 delays burning for five hours under ideal conditions. Sunscreens block ultraviolet radiation of UVB and UVA that cause skin cancer by damaging the DNA and suppressing the immune system. Most people obtain about 80 percent of their lifetime sun exposure before they are 18 years old. Don't forget that a tan is visible evidence of skin damage, and further, it's cumulative. Your skin doesn't forget the sunburn you got when your senior class took a beach trip. It all adds up.

If you run outdoors (and who doesn't?), give up vanity in the interest of health and follow these guidelines:

1. The higher the SPF the better. High SPFs in the range of 30 to 45 compensate for sweating, loss in water activities, and thin application.
2. Wear sunscreen on exposed skin even on cloudy days (UV radiation penetrates cloud cover) and year round-even in the winter. Remember your skin doesn't know the difference- ultraviolet radiation is the same all year. There's just more of it in the summer and at latitudes closer to the equator.
3. Don't forget to apply sunscreen to your scalp if you are bald or balding, and to your ears if they're exposed. That skin is vulnerable too.
4. Slop it on. Sunscreen should be used liberally and often.
5. Sunscreens are just part of your protection plan. Wear a hat. Don't run shirtless. Many skin cancers show up on the back.
6. Avoid exposure between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest.
7. Choose shady areas to run.
8. Wear sunglasses that filter ultraviolet rays to protect the thin skin around your eyes.