

## Keeping safe in the sun

As a member of the pool industry you probably spend quite a bit of time thinking about keeping your customers safe and spend time talking to them about pool safety. As the summer is getting underway it is a good time to think about your employees' safety and your own safety when it comes to the sun.

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers but it is never too late to reduce your chances of developing it. Raising awareness of sun safety sends a message that you care about the well-being of your employees and their families. By educating your employees about the dangers of sun exposure and how to get proper protection, you can help improve their health and wellness and benefit your organization's bottom line.

To reduce your exposure to UV radiation wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses that block UV rays. Wearing a long sleeve shirt can also provide some protection, especially a dark-colored one with tightly woven fabric. If you will be working in one area for a while use an umbrella to block the sun. Take extra measures between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. when UV radiation is at its highest.

Of course don't forget to cover exposed skin with sunscreen and be sure it blocks UVB and UVA light. Waterproof sunscreen will last longer than water resistant if you are sweating or are in the water. Remember that sunscreen usually rubs off if you wipe yourself with a towel. To make sunscreen most effective, apply it 20 to 30 minutes before going outside. A palm-sized amount should be enough to cover an average adult's arms, legs, neck and face. The American Cancer Society says that most sunscreens need to be reapplied about every two hours or sooner, but be sure to check the label.

The sooner you detect skin cancer, the better! It is important to check your skin often, preferably once a month. Follow these step-by-step instructions from the American Cancer Society to examine your skin:

Check your face, scalp, ears, neck, chest and belly

Check your armpits, both sides of your arms, the tops and bottoms of your hands, and in between your fingers and fingernails.

Check your upper and lower back, the front and back of your legs, calves and the tops and bottoms of your feet.

For basal and squamous cell cancers look for new growths, spots, bumps, patches, or sores that don't heal after two to three months. Basal cell carcinomas often look like flat, firm, pale areas or small, raised, pink or red, translucent, shiny, waxy areas that may bleed after a minor injury. Squamous cell carcinomas may look like growing lumps, often with a rough, scaly or crusted surface. They may also look like flat, reddish patches in the skin that grow slowly.

For melanomas use the ABCD rule. Be on the lookout and tell your doctor about any spots that match the following description:

A is for Asymmetry: One half of a mole or birthmark does not match the other.

B is for Border: The edges are irregular, ragged, notched or blurred.

C is for Color: The color is not the same all over and may include shades of brown or black, or sometimes with patches of red, white or blue.

D is for Diameter: The spot is larger than six millimeters across (about ¼ inch – the size of a pencil eraser) or is growing larger.

Other important signs of melanoma include changes in the size, shape or color of a mole or the appearance of a new spot. Some melanomas do not fit the ABCD rule, so it is very important for you to notice changes in skin markings or new spots on your skin.

Be sure to show your doctor any area that concerns you, and remember that sun safety is important every day of the year, not just in the summertime

*The American Cancer Society provided the information for this article. For more information on how the American Cancer Society can help you, your family and co-workers protect yourselves from skin cancer call 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org). They can provide you with materials to help pass this information on to your employees including a PowerPoint presentation and a Podcast.*