

Debunking Sun Safety Myths

Now that summer is in full swing, and more people are receiving their COVID-19 vaccinations, many of us are spending more time in the sun, which means it's even more important to know the do's and don'ts of staying safe while outside.

"A lot of people are simply not aware of the best ways to protect themselves from the sun," said Manju Dawkins, MD, a dermatologist at Kaiser Permanente Baldwin Hills-Crenshaw Medical Offices. "While sunscreen application is a crucial step in protecting yourself and your family members from sun damage, it's only one means of protection." She says a much more comprehensive sun protection routine is required to truly protect oneself from sun damage and skin cancer.

This summer, Dr. Dawkins sheds light on a few myths about sun safety that could be preventing you from getting all the protection you and your loved ones need:

- 1. Myth: I don't need to wear sunscreen on a cloudy day.**
Truth: You can even get sunburned on a foggy day. UV rays can go through clouds, so make sure you protect yourself in rain or shine.
- 2. Myth: I wear sunscreen, so I am completely protected from the sun.**
Truth: While sunscreen is a crucial element in protecting yourself from sun damage, staying in the shade and wearing sun-protective clothing such as hats, sunglasses and clothing made of tightly woven fabrics, are very important in enabling you to enjoy the sun safely.
- 3. Myth: I have a darker skin tone, so I can skip the sunscreen.**
Truth: Anyone can get a sunburn or develop skin cancer. While many people of color are less susceptible to ultraviolet (UV) damage, thanks to the greater amounts of melanin that darker skin produces, people of color can still get sunburned and develop skin cancer.
- 4. Myth: My car windows are tinted, so I am protected from the sun while driving.**
Truth: Car windows do offer some protection from UVB rays, which are the ones that cause sunburn and skin cancer, but UVA rays, which penetrate deeper and cause premature aging, can still get through. In fact, adults who spend a lot of time driving often note more sun damage on their left side than their right due to the UV rays they are exposed to through the windows. Words of advice: Keep sunscreen in your car.
- 5. Myth: Sunscreen doesn't work on my child.**
Truth: Sunscreen should only be applied to children who are 6 months of age and older. Make sure to apply it often enough (every two hours in the direct sun) and more frequently when swimming or sweating. Suffering one or more blistering sunburns in childhood or adolescence more than doubles a person's chances of developing potentially deadly melanoma later in life. Newborns and babies under 6 months should use other forms of sun protection (avoiding direct sunlight, wearing a hat, etc.).
- 6. Myth: I don't get sunburns. I have a healthy tan.**
Truth: There is no such thing as a healthy tan. The physical sign of a tan is the skin's way of trying to protect itself from further skin damage.

To learn more about how to protect your skin from sun damage, visit kp.org/sunscreen.