

Sun Safety

Overview

In the past, people thought sun exposure was a healthy benefit of outdoor activity. Modern scientific information, however, shows many unhealthy effects of sun exposure, such as early skin aging and skin cancer. Skin damage caused by UVB and UVA sun rays appear as freckles and sunburns which lead to tans; long-term damage causes wrinkles, age spots, and skin cancer.

Objective

To develop an awareness in skin cancer prevention through education of youth involved in outdoor activities, recreation, youth sports, and working on farms.

Introduction

1. Introduce yourself to the students; let them know your name, background, and anything else that may interest them and ties into the presentation.
2. Make the students aware that the information you will present to them is important and that they need to pay attention.
3. Inform the students that they will participate in an activity as time allows and they must be responsible during this activity. Stressing responsibility is especially important if you deal with a younger group of students.

Introduce the Sun Safety Topic

- Students all have their own stories and experiences to tell.
- Introduce the sun safety topic, and ask students about sun protection.

Indicators

Sun and Heat Exposure

During late spring and summer, many people like to spend time outside in the sun for fun or work. Overexposure to the sun can damage the skin and could cause skin cancer. Heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and heat rash are possible when you become overexerted in the heat. Put your health first in order to enjoy the summer.

Activity

Materials Needed

- Demonstration display poster
- Sundial hat
- Top hat (sunglasses hat)
- Sunscreen hat
- Cloud hat

- . Shade tree hat
- . Lobster hat

Conducting the Demonstration

Explain the poster board, the hats listed below, and, if time allows, the related topics.

- . **Sundial Hat:** between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm, the sun's rays are closest to us and the most damaging. Talk about the shadow signal concept: if your shadow is shorter than you are, then you need to protect yourself from the sun's rays.
- . **Top Hat (Sunglasses Hat):** to protect yourself from the sun, wear light colored clothing that covers your arms and legs. Wear a wide-brim hat that shields your forehead, nose, ears, and neck. Talk about the students' clothing and what clothing is acceptable sun protection. Buy sunglasses that provide UV protection.
- . **Sunscreen Hat:** in addition to protective clothing, sunscreen protects the skin from the sun. Talk about the SPFs of sunscreen; a sunscreen with at least 15 SPF is needed for adequate protection. Go over the directions on a sunscreen bottle.
- . **Cloud Hat:** even on a cloudy day you can sunburn. Talk about wearing sunscreen and protective clothing on cloudy days.
- . **Shade Tree Hat:** when the sun is strongest in the middle of the day, play inside or in the shade.
- . **Lobster Hat:** no tan is healthy. Skin exposed to the sun takes on a darker color, called pigment, to block the sun's dangerous ways. By tanning, you're damaging your skin and making it work harder to protect you.

Related Topics

Skin Differences: Ask if everyone's skin looks the same. Have the students notice the skin differences in their group. Talk about differences in skin types.

The lighter your skin is the easier sun rays may damage it. Sun rays cause damage even to dark skin. The sun's harmful rays cause trouble no matter what skin looks like.

The Trouble with Tanning Machines

Ask the students if they have ever seen a tanning machine. Ask them if they know any adults or teenagers who visit tanning salons. Explain to them that tanning from a machine is just as dangerous as tanning from the sun.

Many people believe that tanning machines are not dangerous to their skin. Tanning machines cause the same problems as too much sun and can result in skin cancer, wrinkles, and leathery skin.

Other Techniques to Prevent Harmful Effects from the Sun

- Carry a source of water, and take frequent drinks.
- Take frequent breaks in a shaded area during the hottest part of the day.
- Adjust gradually to working in the heat over a period of 10-20 days.
- Move someone suffering from heat exhaustion or heat stroke to a cool environment. Offer sips of water, if conscious, and provide with attention from emergency medical personnel.

Wrap Up

After the activity, discuss with students how sun rays are potentially harmful and what they can do to protect themselves from the sun. Use the following discussion questions:

- Is fresh water available?
- What SPF number is needed for adequate sun protection?
- Is protective clothing available and being worn?