

Every Day is DON'T FRY DAY

By Dr. Anna Guanche



The Friday before Memorial Day has been declared Don't Fry Day by the National Council to remind people about sunscreen and sun protection. In my book, every day of the spring and summer is a "don't fry day." Skin cancer is on the rise, and five blistering sunburns can double your lifetime risk of melanoma. If that's not enough to convince you, sun damage causes wrinkles and brown spots.

What can you do to protect yourself?

Wear a (sun) shirt: The most damaging wavelength for the skin is UVB, which peaks between the hours of 10 am and 4pm, so protect yourself by covering up. Stay in the shade or use a cabana if you will be out during the middle of the day, even if it's cloudy.

Apply sunscreen: Use a sunscreen that is at least SPF 30 and reapply every two hours. Make sure the product label indicates that it

is broad spectrum and will protect against both UVA and UVB rays. With so many sunscreen options—lotions, spray, gel, lip balms—it should be easy to find a formula that works for you. Don't forget the feet and the ears and back of the neck. If you feel a hot spot while you are out in the sun, it probably is one, so add an extra layer on that area if need be.

Wear a hat: Ideally wear a hat that covers your ears and neck. Sun damage is accumulated even when you have sunscreen on and it is difficult to protect your scalp, which does get sun through your hair.

Wear sunglasses: The sun can damage the cells around the eyes and cause harmful growths. Your eyes are at risk for other diseases as a result of sun damage. Stop squinting and protect yourself with lenses that block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

A word about rashes:

Don't squeeze limes in the sun: Limes cause a phytophotodermatitis that starts out as a rash and ends up causing brown marks that can last from months to years. Make margaritas indoors and then enjoy them outside after the lime juice is washed from your skin.

Wear a sunscreen that you have used before and know you are not allergic to: If you tend to have sensitive skin, choose a physical blocker sunscreen that has no chemicals in it. Physical blockers are zinc oxide and titanium dioxide.

Sun allergies appear spontaneously as a sun-distributed rash. The allergy can start at any time and then disappear one or two years later. There are two options: one is to avoid the sun as much as possible and wear sunscreen. The other is to "harden" the skin with gradual sun exposure.

If you do get sunburn, take over-the-counter aspirin at recommended doses (as long as you are not allergic). Apply hydrocortisone one percent cream and a soothing refrigerator-cooled aloe gel to the area. Most importantly, do not go back in the sun the next day and re-burn newly blistered or peeled skin! There will be no way to reverse the damage done—these tips are to help alleviate discomfort.

Hopefully the statistics in the first paragraph will convince you to protect yourself from the sun! Armed with information, you are way ahead of the game. Have fun but be wise about the dangers of UV damage this summer! Remember, every day is DON'T FRY DAY!!!



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