Only You Can Protect YOU!

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I love the sun! It makes me happy and allows me to be outside where I get recharged and de-stress. The sun does a lot for me! It gives me Vitamin D, energy and helps my garden grow. Could there be a down side? Of course there is. We all know that too much sun is bad for our skin, can put us at risk for skin cancer, plus, it gives us wrinkles and age spots. Did you know that over time, it can damage our eyes just by being outside? Too much sun can lead to vision loss, retinal damage, cataracts, macular degeneration and eyelid cancers. Wear sunglasses that protect from both UV-A and UV-B rays, but wearing sunglasses may not be enough. You should also wear a hat with at least a 3 inch brim. If you’re outside between the hours of 10AM and 4PM, when the sun is most intense, try to stay in the shade as much as possible. Check the news for the UV index.

According to the website www.skincancer.org, “the fairer your skin, the greater your age, and the lighter your eyes, the higher your long-term risk of sun damage to your eyes, especially if your work or recreation involves prolonged sunlight exposure.” However, don’t let darker eye color or skin fool you into thinking you are immune. Protect your eyes when you’re outside. It’s the smart thing to do. Besides, sun glasses are cool!

Have you ever seen someone riding a tractor or lawn mower, its 90+ degrees, so humid you could cut the air with a knife and they are out there with long sleeves and a hat with a towel hanging down the back? They’re not crazy, they’re protecting their skin from overexposure to the sun. Some people will wear clothing that is actually sun protective with a high UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor.) What that means is, if the UPF rating is 50, for example, then that article of clothing allows only 1/50th of the sun’s UV radiation to reach the skin. In addition, wear sunscreen (broad spectrum SPF 15 or higher.) Avoid sunlamps and tanning beds.

Your skin color does not make you immune to cancer. Certain skin cancers are caused by genetics and environmental influences and may occur on parts of the body not typically associated with skin cancer. For example, people who have dark skin are more susceptible to acral lentiginous melanoma (ALM), an especially dangerous form of melanoma that typically appears on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The Jamaican singer and musician, Bob Marley, died of ALM when he was only 36.

It is very important to detect skin cancer early in order to improve survival and recovery chances. Don’t know what to look for? Here are some guidelines from Skincancer.org:

- A bump, patch, sore or growth that bleeds, oozes, crusts, doesn’t heal or lasts longer than a month. This may indicate basal cell carcinoma.
- An ulcer, scaly red patch, wart-like growth or sore that sometimes crusts or bleeds could be a sign of squamous cell carcinoma. This type of skin cancer can also develop in old scars or areas of previous physical trauma or inflammation.
- New or existing moles that are asymmetrical, have an irregular border, more than one color, are larger than a pencil eraser or change in any way may indicate melanoma. Pay special attention to suspicious spots on the hands, soles of the feet or under the nails, which could signify ALM.

Every time you get in the shower do a quick self-check in the mirror. If you see a spot that has you concerned, get an appointment with your primary provider or dermatologist as soon as possible. It’s much better to be safe than sorry.

References:
https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/sun-safety.htm
https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000378.htm
https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/sun
Tobacco Cessation Program

This live, in-person program is comprised of four classes, provided once a week for four weeks. Participants interested in receiving pharmaceutical cessation aids will meet one-on-one with a Provider. More information will be provided during the first Tobacco Cessation Class. Please call JBSA-FSH Army Health Promotion at 210.916.7646 for class schedules and to enroll.

Program Eligibility:
The Tobacco Cessation Program is open to all TRICARE beneficiaries.