

SUMMER 2019

# HealthSmarts

## Be Well

Take precautions to protect your precious skin

## Health Tech

Tools to make tracking glucose levels easier

How lifestyle changes are helping one Valley woman thrive with diabetes

# Day by Day



# Here Comes the Sun

Take precautions to protect your precious skin

By Julie Maurer

Spring and summer — a time when many of us are going to be in the great outdoors. Whether you're golfing, swimming, biking or hiking, the sun can be brutal for those who don't protect their skin.

According to Fade Mahmoud, MD, an oncologist at Banner MD Anderson Cancer Center, there are about 5.4 million new cases of melanoma, or skin cancer, diagnosed every year, which makes prevention more important than ever.

"One out of every five people develop melanoma in the United States," he said.

## Everyone is susceptible

Dermatologists have recommended that people of all skin tones should protect their skin from the harmful UV rays. While skin cancer rates for African Americans and Hispanics is

lower than those for light-skinned Caucasians, they still are susceptible to getting skin cancer, according to the American Cancer Society.

The first step for many people who plan to be out in the sun during the warmer months is to apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (spf) of 30 or higher, said Dr. Mahmoud.

"Read the bottle to make sure it covers a broad spectrum, including UV and UVB, and it is water resistant," Dr. Mahmoud said, noting that UVB are the type of rays that cause sunburn and can lead to melanoma.

He recommends a golf-ball size amount of sunscreen to be applied to exposed areas such as arms, face and any other areas not protected by clothing.

"And you need to redo it every two hours, and every time you get out of the pool, even if it's water resistant," Dr. Mahmoud said. "If you're sweating, you need to reapply as well."

Hats are recommended to protect the head from sunlight.

"It should have a wide brim, not like a baseball hat, because you also

need to protect your scalp, ears and neck," Dr. Mahmoud said.

## Take precautions

Finding shade to stand in when possible is also recommended, and avoiding prolonged sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

"And, of course, avoid tanning beds," he said.

Dr. Mahmoud also recommends you get your car windows tinted and even protect your skin on cloudy days.

"When there are clouds in the sky, there is a false sense of security, but you can still be exposed without realizing it," he said, adding that some rainy states, such as Oregon, have the highest number of melanoma diagnoses.

For those who have a hard time remembering to protect their skin before leaving home, Dr. Mahmoud recommends putting sunscreen by the door, or close to your keys. And keep extra hats, sunglasses, etc. in the car.

## Early detection is key

If you do suspect you have an abnormal spot on your skin, Dr. Mahmoud notes it should be examined right away by a doctor.

"The earlier you find them, the greater the chances for successfully treating the disease," he said.

Any moles that change in size or have an abnormal shape should prompt you to go to the doctor, because an unchecked melanoma can get in the blood stream and the cancer can spread.

"Check the spot and get it out," Dr. Mahmoud said.