

## HEALTH

# Sun Safety: UV Rays Don't Discriminate

NewsUSA

(NU) - Skin cancer remains a deadly disease in the United States. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that approximately 5.5 million skin cancer diagnoses and 15,000 deaths will occur this year, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.

Many misconceptions persist about sun protection and skin cancer, especially among people of color.

"The misperception that people of color don't need sunscreen is one we need to change because we do burn and we are susceptible to skin cancer just like everyone else," says Lavdena Orr, MD, a chief medical officer with AmeriHealth Caritas, a health care organization dedicated to the care of those most in need.

"Ultraviolet rays don't discriminate against skin type, so avoiding sunburn is the primary way to reduce one's risk of developing melanoma or any other type of skin cancer."

Although overall rates of melanoma may be higher among whites, African-Americans are more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage when the cancer is more severe and the prognosis is less favorable, according to a 2016 study in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology.

Ginette A. Okoye, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and chair of the department of dermatology at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C., adds that in people of color, skin cancer may be more likely to develop in less obvious areas, such as the feet or nails.

"In some cases, excessive sun exposure is not necessarily the trigger for this type of cancer in skin of color," according to Dr. Okoye. However, she notes that individuals with darker skin are at greater risk of vitamin D deficiency because "the pigment in our skin filters out sunlight which we need to



produce vitamin D in the skin."

Therefore, she recommends vitamin D supplements if needed and a vitamin D-rich diet, including salmon, tuna, and mackerel.

In addition, Dr. Okoye reminds her patients of all ethnicities to pay attention to three areas:

- **Face:** Wear sunscreen daily, or use hats or visors to help protect facial skin from direct sun exposure.

- **Left side:** The left arm, as well as the left side of the face, get a lot of sun exposure while driving. Add some sunscreen or a light, long-sleeved shirt if you have a long summer drive ahead.

- **Cuts and scrapes:** Areas of any sort of skin trauma need extra protection to reduce the risk of postinflammatory hyperpigmentation.

For more information, visit [amerihealthcaritas.com](http://amerihealthcaritas.com).

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends these basic tips for sun protection:

- **Clothing:** Look to long sleeves, wraps, and sarongs to shield your skin.

- **Accessories:** Hats and sunglasses can keep your face, neck, and ears safe and comfortable in the sun. Umbrellas work, too.

- **Timing:** Try to avoid excessive sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when ultraviolet rays are the strongest.

- **Sunscreen:** When you are outdoors, use sunscreen. And reapply every two hours if you are swimming or sweating heavily.