**Skin Cancer Prevention: What You Can Do**

While we may have wondered in recent weeks when sunshine-with-regularity will return to western Montana, we can be sure sunnier weather will make an appearance, eventually! And with it, more time spent in the great outdoor activities we all enjoy. May is Melanoma and Skin Cancer Awareness Month, so before you head out on your river adventure or marathon gardening session, be sure to take a few steps to prevent uncomfortable sunburns and the dangers that can go along with them.

There is no shortage of information at our fingertips, and one great resource is The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). This organization is an independent group that reviews the latest information about what preventive services have the most impact on the health of Americans. When it comes to skin cancer prevention, this is what the group has to say about clinical counseling to prevent skin cancer:

“The Task Force recommends counseling children, adolescents, and young adults aged 10 to 24 years who have fair skin about minimizing their exposure to ultraviolet radiation to reduce risk for skin cancer.”

Always be sure to talk to your doctor and your dermatologist about what you can do to keep your skin healthy and prevent skin cancer. And if you care for or know someone in the 10-24 age group, be sure to encourage skin cancer prevention by finding time to talk to their health care provider about habits that can last a lifetime. The USPSTF recommends the following about health skin habits.

- Use “broad spectrum” sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. This type of sunscreen protects against both UVA and UVB rays.
- Cover up with a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, long-sleeves, and long pants or skirts.
- Stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when the sun’s UV rays are the strongest.
- Avoid tanning booths and sunlamps.

These simple steps can help you enjoy all the sunny moments that lie ahead in this summer season!

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