



Farm Bureau Safety Program

SUN SAFETY - Many people think a dark tan looks healthy, but in reality, skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. The main cause of skin cancer is overexposure to the sun.

The body's natural defense against damaging ultra-violet radiation from the sun is a pigment called melanin. However, even the darkest skin doesn't contain enough melanin to prevent damage resulting from exposure to the sun.

Outdoor workers, such as farmers, have an increased risk of skin cancer due to the lengths of time they spend working in the sun. The sun's rays are brightest between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Farm work won't wait, but there are a few preventive steps you can follow to protect your skin from skin cancer.

Fabric provides an excellent source of protection against the sun. Darker colors tend to block more sun. Some clothing manufacturers are beginning to put Sun Protection Factor (SPF) ratings on their clothes. You should look for a rating of 15 or higher. Generally, a tighter weave of fabric gives more protection. For example, denim jeans have a SPF of 1,700. A hat should have a 4 inch brim all around or a broad bill and flap to cover your ears.

Sunscreen is the best way to protect any exposed skin. It is important that you use the right SPF for you. There are two factors to consider. First, how many minutes can your unprotected skin be in the noonday sun,

before it begins to redden? Second, how many minutes will you be working in the sun? You can then calculate the minimum SPF rating sunscreen you need to apply.

SPF = Minutes to be spent in the sun / Minutes before skin reddens

Always use a sunscreen with a minimum SPF rating of 15. SPF numbers do not add up. If you apply two layers of SPF 10 sunscreen, you still only have an SPF of 10. You should look for the ingredients benzophenone, oxybenzone, methoxybenzone of sulfisobenzene, or Parsol 1789. These chemicals block the UV rays that penetrate deep into the skin. If you sweat heavily, use a waterproof or sports sunscreen.

You should apply sunscreen 20-30 minutes before going outside to give it time to penetrate your skin and protect your cells. You should use one ounce of sunscreen per application. The sun's rays can penetrate through a thin cloud layer, so you should wear sunscreen even if it is a cloudy day. Your lips don't contain any melanin, so be sure to use extra protection for them.

When you purchase farm equipment, consider the benefits of features such as enclosed cabs or sun shades. Your skin's health is vitally important, so please try to protect it.