**Step by Step Sunscreen No-nos!**

ATW Special by Earlene Gleisner, RN

Did you know skin cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed types of cancer in the world and skin cancer is being diagnosed in more and more young people? The good news is that it is also one of the most preventable types of cancer by learning to take the proper precautions.

I know you have heard about using sun screen a million times, but it really is one of your best bets in preventing skin cancer, especially if you spend a lot of time outdoors. The following are some common sunscreen mistakes:

1. **Apply sunscreen BEFORE going outdoors**.Sunscreen needs to be applied 15 to 30 minutes BEFORE going outside to give it time to be absorbed into the skin.
2. **APPLY enough sunscreen.** Experts recommend an adult should use 1 ounce of sunscreen for adequate coverage. Most people forget to apply sunscreen to their face, ears, neck and feet. Confusion about sunscreen and sun exposure can put a lot of kids at risk for getting a [sunburn](http://firstaid.about.com/od/injuriesathome/ht/06_sunburn.htm).

A good rule is to use approximately half a teaspoon of sunscreen for your child's head and neck and each arm and one teaspoon to his chest and abdomen, back, and each leg. A larger child may need a little more. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using an ounce of sunscreen for a young adult.

Another good general rule is to use a palm full of sunscreen to cover your child's body. Since larger kids have larger hands, that helps you adjust the amount of sunscreen for different-size kids.

1. **APPLY after swimming or sweating.**
If your sunscreen is not labeled "waterproof" or "water resistant", then it *does* come off while you're in the water or sweating. Check the product label to learn how often to reapply it. Most provide between 45 minutes to 2 hours of coverage.
2. **REAPPLY sunscreen.**
One application of sunscreen does not provide all-day protection. Check the label for specific instructions. Remember to protect your lips from the sun by applying a lipstick, gloss, or balm that contains sunscreen.
3. **USE SUNSCREEN whether it’s sunny or cloudy.**
Sunscreen needs to be used on both sunny and cloudy days. Harmful UV rays can still affect people when it's cloudy. It's important to keep in mind that all people are at risk of skin damage caused by the sun's harmful UV rays, so it is crucial to wear sunscreen regardless of your skin tone or ethnicity.

This month's challenge: After each trip to the restroom, drink a glass of water to replenish your fluids. Dehydration is another of summer's challenges and we often ignore signs our bodies need water. One sure way is to consider the color of your urine. If your urine is much darker than pale yellow or clear, like the color of tea or apple juice, this means that your body is dehydrated.

“Avenues to Wellness” was created especially for Inland Mendocino County by the Frank R. Howard Foundation. Visit [www.avenuestowellness.org](http://www.avenuestowellness.org/) or email atwforhealth@gmail.com for more information.