

Save your skin this summer

Written by NM Department of Health
Friday, 03 July 2015 10:12

SANTA FE – Summer came June 21st this year, and as if we needed to be reminded that summer is always warmer than spring – the high temperatures quickly ratcheted up to 100 degrees and then some.

Protecting our skin from skin cancer is something we need to be thinking about year-round in New Mexico, but it's when temperatures are at their hottest, and we're more inclined to be wearing the least that we tend to put ourselves at the most risk.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. The deadliest form of skin cancer is melanoma. Most cases of melanoma are caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UVA) light which we get from either the sun or indoor tanning. If left untreated, melanoma can spread throughout the body, and it can kill us. The New Mexico Tumor Registry reports the average number of new melanoma cases in NM during 2008-2012 was 406 per year. Also, the average number of melanoma deaths in NM during 2009-2013 was 60 per year.

That's why the New Mexico Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend these easy options to lower your skin cancer risks:

- Avoid indoor tanning
- When outside, stay in the shade, especially during midday hours
- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs
- Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays
- Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher and both UVA and UVB protection

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