

Dear Parents,

Today in school . . .



your child was taught about skin cancer and sun protection through the Sun Protection Outreach Teaching by Students (SPOTS) program. During this program, two medical or allied health students spent a class period with your child. Through the use of a PowerPoint lecture, games, hands-on demonstrations, a video, and a skin analyzer machine, your child learned the risk factors for, and how to detect a skin cancer, and ways to protect themselves from ultraviolet radiation.

Why is this important?

Skin cancer is more common than **all** other cancers combined and is one of the leading causes of cancer death among women aged 25-29 years. The two main factors in skin cancer development are exposure to UVR (through



sun exposure and the use of tanning beds) and heredity. The rate of adolescent skin cancer has been steadily rising over the past 20 years. Tanning beds are especially problematic because they use UVA rays, which cause advanced skin aging and cancer without producing the warning sign of a sunburn, plus they give off a large dose of radiation in a small time period. Studies have shown that by age 18, 40-47% of white females in the US have used a tanning bed and the UVR in tanning beds is up to 15 X as strong as the sun. Redheads and blonds with blue eyes and fair skin, people who have a lot of moles, and families with a history of skin cancer are at a higher risk for skin cancer. Even in winter and on cloudy days, UVR is present. Sun damage is cumulative – the older you are, the greater the damage. Freckles are often the first sign of sun damage. Parents are an important role model for their children. Please protect not only your student, but yourself. Be a good role model -- demonstrate sun safe behaviors.

Ask your child what they have learned about sun protective methods:

Ask to look at the SPOTS brochure and handout

(includes tips for applying self-tanner and choosing a sunscreen)

- Apply sunscreen every day year round. Put a bottle next to their toothbrush.
- Start with an SPF of 30, apply a full ounce to the body, and reapply every 2 hours.
- Choose sunscreen with a nice smell that feels good on the skin – it only works if you wear it!
- Use wide-brimmed hats, sunglasses, and UPF/SPF clothing.
- The SPF of a wet white t-shirt is 3! Wearing one in the pool won't do much to protect you.
- Seek shade between 10am and 4pm and stay out of the intense sun from 11am to 1pm.
- Ask your child about the ABC's of melanoma (suspicious moles are Asymmetric, have irregular Borders, have more than one Color, have a large Diameter, or are Evolving).

Skin cancer is an easy cancer to see since it grows on your skin. Check your body and the body of your child on a regular basis for any concerning spots and see a dermatologist if you notice anything suspicious.

Early detection is key!

If you have questions about the SPOTS program or would like more information, please visit our websites at <http://spots.wustl.edu> or <http://dermatology.slu.edu/spots>

~ The SPOTS teachers thank you ~