



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **St. Charles County Government**

**Department of Community Health and the Environment**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY FROM SUN DAMAGE**

*Fun in the Sun Can Cause Lasting Problems Without Protection*

**St. Charles County, Missouri** – Although vital for the survival of every living thing, too much exposure to the sun's rays can have damaging effects. As the most common form of cancer, skin cancer was diagnosed in more than 68,000 Americans in 2009 (the most recent statistics available) and caused more than 8,400 deaths.

As we enter May with warmer weather and longer, sunnier days ahead, it's important to remember to protect yourself and your family from the harmful effects of too much sun. Many consider a tan to be an attractive feature that is a sign of good health, but melanin (the pigment that colors the skin and shows off as a tan) is actually a signal that skin cells have been damaged by ultraviolet (UV) rays. Although each person reacts differently, everyone's skin can be harmed by too much sunlight, and one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. In addition to potentially deadly cancers, excessive sun exposure can cause irreversible damage like premature aging, vision defects, and a suppressed immune system.

Avoiding peak periods (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) when UV rays are strongest is the best way to minimize your risk, but taking other steps adds to your protection. Even when skies are cloudy a person can be at risk, so wearing clothing like wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts and long pants will cover skin to add protection. Using a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher on all exposed areas will protect from UVA and UVB rays, but this sunscreen must be continually re-applied — especially after excessive sweating or time in the pool. Be aware that sunscreen can expire within three years of purchase and should be discarded after this expiration date or if exposed to excessive temperatures. Sunglasses that block UVA and UVB rays are necessary to protect your eyes from the potentially damaging effects of UV rays. You can also reduce the risk of exposure by remaining in the shade of a tree, an umbrella or an overhang, but you should also apply sunscreen with this for maximum protection.

To learn more about the consequences of excessive sun exposure, the Department of Community Health and the Environment's Health Education Team offers free Sun Safety presentations to schools and community groups. The presentation includes information on how the sun affects the body, the consequences of overexposure, and tips for protecting against radiation. To schedule a presentation, please call **Brittany Camacho** or **Molly Rollins** at (636) 949-7400.

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