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## Farmers and Skin Cancer



Farmers face many potential dangers in their line of work, from machinery injuries to chemical exposures, but one danger they can't see is the sun's ultraviolet rays. They spend many hours in the mid-day sun, which is a major risk factor for all skin cancers, including the most serious, melanoma. Farmers receive more ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure than the general public for many reasons, including:

- Long workdays spent outside in the sun, especially from May-October.
- Sweating may also contribute to UV-related skin damage because it increases a person's photosensitivity of the skin, leading to the risk of sunburns.
- Sunscreen comes off when you sweat. Remember to reapply!
- UV radiation reflects off water, sand, concrete, light-colored surfaces and snow. Even when wearing a hat, UV radiation will reflect off the surface and can damage the skin.

It is estimated that nearly **9,500 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with skin cancer every day**. On average, **one person dies from melanoma every hour in the United States**. The risk of melanoma can be reduced by protecting the skin from the sun and its harmful ultraviolet rays. Even on a cloudy day, up to 80% of the sun's ultraviolet rays can pass through the clouds.

Farmers need to be protective of their bodies when working outdoors. With a few simple steps, you can be active and protect your skin from the sun:

- **Seek shade when appropriate.** Avoid the sun's rays when they are the strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. If your shadow appears to be shorter than you are, seek shade.

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- **Wear protective clothing**, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses, where possible. Ask for a cloth flap that can be secured to your cap or hardhat to protect the back of the neck.
- **Generously apply a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher to all exposed skin. “Broad-spectrum” provides protection from both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Reapply approximately every two hours, even on cloudy days, and after excessive sweating.
- **Use extra caution near water, snow, and sand** because they reflect and intensify the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase your chances of sunburn.
- **Avoid tanning beds.** Ultraviolet light from the sun and tanning beds can cause skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look tan, consider using a self-tanning product or spray, but continue to use sunscreen with it.
- **Know your spots** and be aware of your skin and the moles you have. If you see any mole or spot on your skin that is changing, itching, bleeding or growing, see a dermatologist.

IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!



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