

# HEALTH MATTERS

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## Sun Safety

**T**he sun, the sand, the surf. There's nothing more wonderful than a bright, summer day on the North Fork until you notice sunburn that could develop into skin cancer. The Skin Cancer Foundation notes that while cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, one in five Americans will develop skin cancer by the age of 70.

Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital (SBELIH) collaborates with Mollie's Fund to develop initiatives for skin cancer prevention. Mollie's Fund, established in 2001 in memory of Mollie Biggane who sadly died when she was 20 years old, just six months after noticing a malignant mole on her thigh and underwent surgery, chemotherapy,

and radiation treatments, has been at the forefront of melanoma awareness and partners with peers in the melanoma community. SBELIH offers skin cancer screenings as a routine part of the Emergency Department.

"A routine screening for skin cancer takes place during patient intake," says Dr. Lawrence R. Schiff, SBELIH Vice Service Chief, Emergency Medicine. "The nurses ask patients whether they have had a history of skin cancer, and, if so, what type. They also inquire about any suspicious lesions the patient may have. Based on these responses, if there's a cause for concern, the healthcare provider is promptly notified for further assessment."

Basal cell carcinoma is the most common type of skin cancer seen on the East End. Dr. Schiff says, "This is a skin cancer that's caused by too much sunlight or UV light exposure."

The best way to stay sun-safe is to add a few simple steps to your daily routine to protect yourself in every season and see a dermatologist for an annual screening.

Start by covering up, especially if you're going to be near the water. Clothing is a consistent barrier that won't wash off like sunscreen. Look for high-tech hats and fabrics that offer Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF). The UPF indicates how much UV radiation (both UVA and UVB) can reach your skin. For example, a long-sleeved shirt made from UPF 50 fabric will block up to 98% of the sun's rays and reduces your exposure significantly. To protect your eyes be sure to wear UV-blocking sunglasses.

Find some shade during the peak hours of 10 am and 4 pm when the sun is the most intense. Enjoy time under an umbrella on the beach, relax under a tree, or spend time under a sun-protective awning. It's best to walk your dog early or late in the day, especially in the summer, when the sun is low in the sky and generally cooler.

Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher every day. You can find SPF in face creams and moisturizers, sports sprays, and lotion and stick formula sunblock. If you're swimming or sweating look for water-resistant products and liberally reapply every two hours. People with sensitive skin should look for mineral-based products that contain zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. The best sunscreen is the one you use every day.

If you do get a sunburn, take a pain reliever like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Take cool baths or showers to help relieve pain and apply a gel pain reliever like aloe to your skin. Drink lots of water to help prevent dehydration. Leave any blisters alone and keep them clean and covered. For mild to moderate sunburn, use a soothing nonprescription medicated cream a few times a day. If symptoms are severe seek medical care immediately.

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