

HEALTH MATTERS

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UV Safety Month (Sun Safety)

Picture the sun, the sand, and the surf—a perfect summer day on the North Fork. However, amidst the beauty, there lurks a danger: the threat of sunburn and its potential to lead to skin cancer. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, despite being highly preventable, one in five Americans will face skin cancer by the age of 70.

Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital (SBElih) has teamed up with Mollie's Fund to spearhead initiatives for skin cancer prevention. Established in 2001 in

memory of Mollie Biggane, who tragically passed away at 20 from melanoma just six months after discovering a malignant mole on her thigh, Mollie's Fund has been pivotal in raising melanoma awareness and collaborating with peers in the melanoma community. SBElih now conducts routine skin cancer screenings as part of its Emergency Department procedures.

"During patient intake, we conduct routine screenings for skin cancer," explains Dr. Lawrence R. Schiff, Vice Service Chief of Emergency Medicine at SBElih. "Nurses

inquire about any history of skin cancer and examine for suspicious lesions. Based on their findings, if there is cause for concern, healthcare providers promptly proceed with further assessment."

On the East End, basal cell carcinoma reigns as the most prevalent type of skin cancer. Dr. Schiff attributes its prevalence to excessive exposure to sunlight or UV light.

To safeguard against the sun's harmful effects, integrate simple practices into your daily routine year-round and schedule an annual screening with a dermatologist.

Start by covering up, especially near water. Clothing acts as a reliable barrier, unlike sunscreen, and consider garments and hats made with Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) fabric. For instance, UPF 50 clothing can block up to 98% of UV radiation, significantly reducing exposure. Additionally, wear UV-blocking sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Seek shade between 10 am and 4 pm, when the sun's rays are strongest. Relax under an umbrella, a tree, or a sun-protective awning. If walking your dog, opt for early mornings or late evenings to avoid peak sun exposure.

Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher daily. Whether in face creams, sports sprays, or lotions, opt for water-resistant options and reapply every two hours, especially when swimming or sweating. Those with sensitive skin should choose mineral-based sunscreens containing zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. Remember, the best sunscreen is the one used consistently.

If sunburn occurs, alleviate discomfort with pain relievers like ibuprofen or acetaminophen, cool baths or showers, and soothing aloe gel. Stay hydrated and avoid bursting blisters; instead, keep them clean and covered. For moderate sunburns, apply a soothing nonprescription medicated cream several times a day. Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.

By adopting these precautions, you can enjoy the sun safely while reducing your risk of skin cancer.

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