Some medicines such as antibiotics, hormones and antidepressants can make your skin more sensitive to the UV rays of the sun. Take special care to protect your skin if you are taking these types of drugs.

Preventing skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S., but there are things you can do to try and prevent it. One of the most important steps you can take is to protect yourself from the ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun:

- About one hour before you go out in the sun, put on sunscreen with at least 15 SPF. Reapply if you get wet.
- Do not use tanning booths or sunlamps.
- If you can, stay out of the sun when the UV rays are most intense. The sun is the strongest from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. standard time and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daylight savings time. Its rays are also the most intense during late spring and early summer, but UV rays can reach you any time of year and even during cloudy weather.
- Wear protective clothing such as long sleeves and hats when you are in the sun. And, don’t forget your sunglasses.
Types of skin cancer

There are three types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. Their names come from where they originate in the skin. The outer layer of the skin is made up of squamous cells. Basal cells are found below the squamous cells. Melanocytes (pigment cells) are in the deepest layer of the skin. Melanoma begins in these cells.

Basal cell is the most common skin cancer found in people with fair skin. It usually shows up in places on the body that are often in the sun, such as the face. Squamous cell is most common in people with dark skin and shows up in places on the body that aren’t usually in the sun. Fair-skinned people can get squamous cell skin cancer, but for them, it is mostly found on parts of the body that have been in the sun.

Basal cell and squamous cell are easier to prevent and cure than melanoma. Melanoma can show up on any part of the body and rarely occurs in people with dark skin. Melanoma sometimes runs in families.

Get to know your skin

Early detection of skin cancer is key. Examine your body to learn where your birthmarks, moles and other marks are, and how they look and feel. Do these checks regularly and let your doctor know if any new moles appear. And follow the National Cancer Institute’s “ABCDEs” when checking the moles you already have on your skin.

A is for asymmetry. Both halves of a noncancerous mole should be the same.

B is for border. The edges of a noncancerous mole should be smooth, not ragged or blurry.

C is for color. Uneven color is a concern.

D is for diameter. If a mole changes size (especially if it gets bigger), talk to your doctor.

E is for evolving. If the mole changes in any other way, talk to your doctor as well.

Remember, you don’t have to hide from the sun, just protect yourself from it.