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Wise Notes for Consumers

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Staying Sun-Safe

With the first day of summer this week, it's time to review the risks that come from sun exposure. Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States? According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 5 million people are treated for skin cancer each year, which equates to a cost of over \$8 billion.

While skin cancer can also be caused from tanning beds or sun lamps, the most common cause is cumulative exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays, says Erica Reyes, a health specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. "Increased exposure can often lead to the deadliest type of skin cancer known as Melanoma, taking the lives of more than 9,000 people each year."

Skin cancer forms in many shapes in sizes, so staying actively aware of new spots or irregular moles on your skin is necessary for your health. Most doctors recommend checking your own skin at least once a month. If you happen to notice any new or irregular spots, be sure to tell your personal physician at your next check-up and request to see a dermatologist if necessary.

When self-checking to see if a spot is Melanoma, Reyes recommends using the "ABCDE" rule from the American Cancer Society:

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- **A is for Asymmetry:** One half of a mole or birthmark does not match the other.
- **B is for Border:** The edges are irregular, ragged, notched or blurred.
- **C is for Color:** The color is not the same all over.
- **D is for Diameter:** The spot is larger than 6 millimeters across.
- **E is for Evolving:** The mole is changing in size, shape or color.

Regardless of what skin tone you have, anyone can get skin cancer. The good news is that most skin cancers can be prevented. However, it is up to you to make sure you are taking precautionary measures when spending time out in the sun. The Center for Disease Control recommends using a layered approach for sun protection. Here are some easy steps to follow when planning to spend time outdoors:

- Seek shade, especially during midday hours.
- Wear a hat, sunglasses and protective clothing to shield skin.
- Use broad spectrum sunscreen with at least 15 SPF to protect exposed skin.
- Re-apply sunscreen every two hours, especially after swimming, sweating or toweling off.

Being outdoors is a great way for you to stay active, combat stress or enjoy fun activities with family and friends. Just remember while doing these things, it is important to stay sun- safe and protect the skin you're in. For additional information contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service-Wise County office at 940-627-3341.

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