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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Skin Cancer Awareness**

We all have different ways to enjoy the summer sun, but we should all have at least one thing in common. Whether it's a vigorous day of bicycling or a relaxing day reading in the backyard, we should be aware of the power of the sun and take precautions to limit exposure.

"The sun emits harmful ultraviolet rays (UV-A and UV-B) which we cannot see. Long-term, unprotected exposure to these UV rays causes up to 90 percent of all skin cancer. In fact, skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States," said Diane Cusworth, Director of the Otsego County Department of Health.

More than one million new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the United States this year. It is important to start from childhood to protect against skin cancer.

"Most of a person's lifetime skin damage, which increases the risk for skin cancer, occurs before the age of 18. Remember, sunburned or tanned skin is damaged skin. Even if a child's sunburn or tan fades, the damage caused by that tan or burn does not," Diane Cusworth said.

"The damage keeps adding up with each sunburn or tan and may one day result in skin cancer. No matter how hard adults work at protecting their skin, the sun damage they received as children cannot be undone," she warned.

The good news is that skin cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer. The Otsego County Department of Health recommends these simple steps for sensible sun protection:

- Keep infants out of the sun for their first six months.
- Limit the amount of time children spend in the sun.
- Schedule outside activities for early morning or late afternoon. Avoid the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. These are considered the hours of peak ultraviolet exposure.
- Keep children in the shade. Use an umbrella or a tent, or use a tree for natural shade. Carriages and strollers with hoods and canopies provide shade for babies and toddlers.
- Make sure to cover children up when they are in the sun. Choose clothes such as long-sleeved shirts and long shorts that are made from tightly woven fabrics. Wear wide-brimmed hats that shade the face, scalp, neck and ears. Wear sunglasses that are rated to block close to 100 percent of the sun's UV-A and UV-B rays.

Be especially careful to protect children from the sun on cloudy or hazy days. Clouds do not block most UV rays. Also, be careful around surfaces, such as sand, cement and water, that can reflect the sun's damaging rays on the skin.

When out in the sun, be aware of the effects of certain medications. Some prescriptions and over-the-counter medications can cause the skin to be more sensitive to the sun.

Use sunscreen to reduce exposure to the sun's harmful rays.

- Choose a sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher and offers both UV-A and UV-B protection.
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside.
- Rub a generous amount of sunscreen on all uncovered skin. Do not apply near the eyes. Light clothing does not filter out all UV rays, so also use sunscreen on areas that will be covered by light clothing.
- Use a sunscreen stick or lip balm on sensitive areas, such as the lips, nose, ears, hands and feet.
- Choose a water-resistant or waterproof sunscreen for children playing in the water.
- Sunscreen should be re-applied every two hours.
- Towel-dry your child before re-applying sunscreen if your child is sweaty or has been swimming.

For more information about skin cancer and protecting yourself and your family from the sun's harmful rays

visit on-line at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) or call:

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