

EXTENSION NOTES



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Ways to Protect Yourself from the Sun

The sun is important for farmers' careers and livelihoods, but the sun's powerful rays do not always shine to your benefit. Since you spend most of your time outdoors, you are at increased risk of not only getting suntans but also sunburns and skin cancers compared to other segments of the population.

While they may seem like a harmless part of your occupation, suntans are your bodies' defense mechanism against too much sun and can cause your skin to prematurely age. Premature aging results in skin changes such as freckles, rough skin and wrinkles.

Sunburns happen when your body receives too much of the sun's radiation. Besides being painful, a sunburn can cause the skin to blister. This is a sign of a second-degree burn.

Skin cancers occur when our bodies get too many ultra-violet rays. The three most common types of skin cancer are basal-cell carcinoma, melanoma and squamous-cell carcinoma. Basal-cell and squamous-cell carcinomas are the most common kinds of skin cancers, and when caught early, the great majority can be cured.

Melanoma is far more dangerous, as it can spread to other parts of your body including your organs. If not caught early, melanoma can be life threatening and even deadly. Melanomas appear as tan, brown or black spots and often appear near a mole or dark spot on the skin.

While anyone can get skin cancer, those of you with fairer complexions are at the greatest risk. This is because your skin cells contain less of the brown pigment melanin, which helps block damaging UV rays. This means you get burns and freckles easier than other skin types.

It is important for you to be aware of the warning signs of skin cancer and perform a self-check each month for signs of a potential skin problem. Warning signs include changes in color, size and shape of moles or dark spots on your skin. These spots may also ooze or bleed or cause pain, itchiness or tenderness. Your hands, feet and under your nails are particularly sensitive to sun exposure.

The good news is you can lower your risk of getting skin cancer by reducing your exposure to the sun. The sun's rays are the most powerful between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., so you may want to move field work to the early morning or later in the afternoon to avoid the sun. When outside, wear a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirts and pants. Use sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of at least 15 on any exposed part of your body. Reapply sunscreen throughout the day so the sunscreen stays effective. Remember to wear sunscreen regardless of the weather. The sun's rays are present whether the day is sunny or cloudy.

If you notice any changes to your skin, contact a dermatologist or your primary care physician. More information on the effects of sun exposure is available at the Carter County office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people

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Upcoming Events:

- The **Olive Hill Farmer's Market** is located in the Save-a-Lot parking lot and will open on Monday, June 16th at 3:00 PM. The **Grayson Farmer's Market** will open on Saturday, June 21st at 9:00 AM. The market is located in the shed behind the Extension Office.