

Year-round skin care
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Sunburns and skin cancer don't have an exclusive partnership with hot months at the beach. Ultraviolet (UV) rays are still present, even in the middle of winter.

Karen Boyd, an oncology nurse navigator with OSF HealthCare, says sunscreen is an important part of skin safety 365 days a year.

"There are SPF {sun protection factor} sunscreens, we recommend 30 or above that you need to apply to your face, your neck and your ears if they are exposed," Boyd says. "Don't forget about your lips; lip balm is so important."

You've probably been told that the sun reflects off the sand or water and can increase your chances of sunburn when you're at the lake or beach. Boyd says it's the same idea with snow.

"Even if there's snow on the ground, you have that glare. Your eyes can feel the effect from the sun," Boyd says.

And that's why Boyd recommends UV protective sunglasses.

"UV rays damage eye surface tissue, the cornea, the lens, and can even affect you later, as far as cataracts, acute macular degeneration and even cancers of the eye," Boyd says while quoting an American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) excerpt. "We don't think about cancers of the eye often."

Photokeratitis, also known as an "eye sunburn," can be very painful. Boyd says an important way to keep your skin healthy, in general, is by hydrating.

"Oral hydration is the key, and water is always the best thing. So, hydrate yourself in the summer and in the winter. It will help protect your body and your skin," Boyd says.

After a cold and windy day of shoveling snow outside, you may head inside for a mug of hot cocoa and notice your face is extra red. People usually chalk this up to wind burn or just the cold; Boyd says this isn't always the case.

"How do we know for a fact that that's not the UV rays?" Boyd asks. "It may be from the reflection off the snow, and it could be sunburn as well."

The ABCDEs of melanoma skin cancer are important things to keep in mind when it comes to your skin health.

- **A:** Asymmetry. "Is it unevenly shaped or notched. Does it look different?" she asks.
- **B:** Border irregularity. "The edges of the mole; has it changed? Is it not clearly defined? Is it not a perfect circle?" she asks.
- **C:** Color. "Was it a light brown pigmentation but now it's turning darker? If it looks crusty and it peels off, that's another key point," she says.
- **D:** Diameter. "Has it changed in size or grown?" Boyd asks.
- **E:** Evolution. "Has it evolved or changed? Does it look different?" Boyd asks.

Boyd says, if you're concerned, you know your body. Mention it to your doctor and they can refer you to a dermatologist.