

# Parents' skin cancer concern doesn't keep kids inside

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Credit: Flickr/WisconsinDepartmentofNaturalResources

Pick your poison: sun exposure that leads to skin cancer or low physical activity that leads to obesity? In fact, a University of Colorado Cancer Center study published this week in the journal *Preventing Chronic Disease* shows that parents' concern about skin cancer doesn't make them keep their kids indoors.

"Actually, our [hypothesis](#) was the opposite – that if parents were concerned about [skin cancer](#) they wouldn't let their children go out as

much," says Alexander Tran, summer fellow working with Lori [Crane](#), PhD, CU Cancer Center investigator and chair of the Department of Community & Behavioral Health at the Colorado School of Public Health.

The study used data from a 999 child cohort of 8-9 year olds from within the group known as the Colorado Kids Sun Care Program, a research program ongoing since 1998. Phone interviews determined parents' level of concern about melanoma, asking questions including "How serious do you think melanoma is?" and "How easy or hard is it for doctors to treat a typical case of melanoma?" Parents were also asked how many hours per day their children spend outside and physical examinations determined kids' body mass indices (BMIs). Tran and Crane controlled for possible confounding factors including race, skin color and socioeconomic status.

"Our new hypothesis is that maybe we had the relationship reversed," Tran says. "Perhaps instead of higher melanoma concern leading to staying inside, it's the parents of kids who spend the most time outside who are most concerned about skin cancer. This is a good finding: it suggests that children can get plenty of outdoor [physical activity](#) and prevent skin cancer by using good sun protection measures such as wearing a hat and shirt, and applying sunscreen."

"Some studies generate more questions than answers," Tran says. Further study within the Colorado Kids Sun Care Program will explore the interrelationships between skin cancer awareness, sun protection behaviors, outdoor play, and obesity.

**More information:** [www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2012/11\\_0345.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2012/11_0345.htm)

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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