

Skin cancer survivors: How to stay safe in the sunshine

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For many people, playing and relaxing in the sun is fun. But for skin cancer survivors, the sun can be a source of fear and anxiety. That's because sun exposure is one of the most significant risk factors for

developing skin cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the U.S.

People who have previously fought [skin cancer](#) may find themselves on pins and needles, worrying about cancer reoccurrence. Dr. Dawn Davis, a Mayo Clinic dermatologist, says skin cancer survivors don't have to shun the sun, but they should take some precautions.

"The dermatologists would like for all patients to be sun safe and sun smart, and it does not mean that if you've had a [melanoma](#) or skin cancer diagnosis that you need to avoid sunlight," says Dr. Davis.

She says it's a good idea to avoid exposure to [direct sunlight](#) for prolonged periods and stay away from artificial UV radiation.

"We educate our patients about sunscreen use and photoprotective measures about avoiding peak times of sunlight, such as 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., avoiding tanning beds and other carcinogens," explains Dr. Davis.

She says it is crucial former skin cancer patients visit a dermatologist for a full skin examination.

"A patient with a skin cancer or melanoma should be followed for routine follow-ups for melanomas approximately every three to six months for the first three to five years after their melanoma diagnosis has occurred," says Dr. Davis.

Health experts say it's important for survivors to not let a previous skin cancer diagnosis dictate how they live their lives.

"I want my patients with skin cancer to lead happy, healthy, active and normal lives doing all the hobbies, jobs and activities of daily living that

they did prior to their diagnosis," says Dr. Davis.

Dr. Davis says there are several things you can do to protect yourself from the sun, including wearing [protective clothing](#), and wearing sunglasses. She also recommends people use sunscreen with a sun protection factor, or SPF, of at least 30. She says it will help to protect against harmful UV rays and reduce the risk of skin cancer.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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