

This fact sheet summarizes the evaluation and recommendations regarding skin cancer from the Task Force on Community Preventive Services (Task Force) in the Community Guide. The Community Guide addresses the effectiveness of population-based interventions for three strategies to reduce skin cancer: 1) setting-specific interventions, 2) population-specific interventions, and 3) community-wide interventions. State cancer programs have great potential to diminish the burden of skin cancer through education and policy approaches.

State health agencies can collaborate with public schools and community partners around interventions to prevent skin cancer among youth and adults.

Background Information

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. Melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer accounts for more than 60,000 cases of cancer and about 8000 deaths each year.
- The greatest preventable risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays.
- 43% of children 11 and under experience sunburns; only 62% use sunscreen and 27% stay in the shade to prevent burning.
- Less than one third of youth aged 11 to 18 years practice any sun protection behavior (wearing protective clothing, staying in the shade, or using sunscreen).
- Only 31% of adults report practicing any sun protection behavior.

Interventions recommended with sufficient evidence of effectiveness

- Educational and policy approaches in primary schools:
 - Review of 20 studies included six studies that showed sufficient improvement in children's sun-protective "covering up" behavior (i.e., wearing hats, long-sleeved shirts, and pants).
 - Median increase in sun-protective behavior was 25 percent for studies using a concurrent control group.
 - The evidence reviewed cannot determine the effectiveness of improving other sun-protective behaviors like avoiding the sun or seeking shade.
- Educational and policy approaches in recreational or tourism settings for adults:
 - Review of 11 studies included five studies showing sufficient improvement in adult sun-protective "covering up" behavior.
 - Median increase in sun-protective behavior was 11.2 percent.
 - Interventions were found to be effective in a range of settings including parks and pools.
 - The evidence reviewed was insufficient to determine the effectiveness of educational and policy approaches in recreational settings in improving children's sun-protective behavior.

Interventions with insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness

- Education and policy interventions in child care centers; secondary schools and colleges; and occupational settings.
- Interventions oriented to health care system settings and providers
- Interventions oriented to parents and caregivers
- Community-wide mass media and small media interventions without other activities
- Community-wide multi-component interventions (individually directed strategies, mass media campaigns, and environmental and policy changes)

Resources

- The Guide to Community Preventive Services: www.thecommunityguide.org
- CDC's Skin Cancer Primary Prevention and Education Initiative

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nscpep/index.htm>

- American Cancer Society fact sheet <http://www.cancer.org/downloads/PRO/SkinCancer.pdf>
- National Cancer Institute, skin cancer information <http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancertopics/types/skin>

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