

HealthyLiving

IN HAMPTON ROADS

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MEET THE PROFESSIONAL

Fun in the sun is good but remember to protect your skin

You're all set for a day at the beach or on the boat. Snacks and beverages are packed, towels are tucked into your tote bag and you've got sunglasses and a book or two to browse.

Is your protective sunscreen in there, too? Hopefully it is. Your skin is something you really want to protect from sunburn – even moderate tanning.

"There is no such thing as a 'healthy tan,'" says Hampton dermatologist Leslie Coker. "Tanning of the skin is a result of ultraviolet ray damage to the DNA of your skin cell. Sun damage is cumulative. A golden tan while you are young could mean skin cancer and a leathery hide when you are middle aged."

Q. What makes a good sunscreen and how should you use it? Look for a broad-spectrum sunscreen – one that blocks UVA and UVB rays – with a SPF of 15 or more. Remember that waterproof sunscreens protect up to 80 minutes in the water, while water-resistant ones are good for only 40 minutes. As for makeup with sunscreen, the more the better.

Q. How does being on the beach or in a boat change what the sun does to your skin? You are getting direct sunlight plus you're exposed to reflective rays off the water. Sweating and swimming rinses sunscreen off so reapplying it is important. Unfortunately, reapplication on sandy or wet skin is tough. Go for sun-protective clothing for large body areas. Wind breaks down the outer protective layer of skin and this magnifies sun damage; lube up with a heavy sunscreen and wear a hat.

Q. What are the visible signs of sun damage to skin? Age spots, freckles, wrinkles and fine superficial blood vessels are the typical signs. Ultra violet rays also accelerate the breakdown of collagen and elastin, causing the skin to become thin and not as elastic.

Q. Do people use too much sunscreen, at the risk of not getting enough Vitamin D from the sun? Most people get adequate amounts of sun exposure with daily activities like getting your mail or walking to and from your car. For anyone who never sees the light of day, Vitamin D deficiency is possible. Women and men with a personal or family history of osteoporosis should have their Vitamin D levels checked.

Q. What is good and bad for skin in general? Many people over wash. The skin is a barrier that prevents moisture loss and protects us from infection, etc. Detergents and scrubbing, as in exfoliating, is so popular and, in most cases, I find it detrimental. Smooth pink skin exfoliated or raw skin is not healthy. I recommend using soap in body folds but discourage my patients from lathering up their entire body. A thin layer of petroleum jelly on wet skin traps moisture and when used correctly leaves skin soft and smooth.

Q. What summer skin-care regimen do you follow for yourself and child? I hate to name products because there are many good sunscreens available at drugstores. I like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide products (sun blockers) and I have found a very sheer product that I use first thing in the morning. Ellie and I both wear sun protective clothing and hats because even I dislike rubbing creams on my arms and trunk. Ellie and I reapply our 30+ SPF every two hours when we are outside and we always search for shade! My skin-care maintenance routine includes tretinoin cream (like Renova) alternating with topical Vitamin C serum nightly.



LESLIE "LEE" ROBIN COKER

Profession: Dermatologist, in practice and partnership with father William L. Coker Jr., Associates in Dermatology in Hampton; 838-8030.

Age: 38

Home: Newport News

Family: Husband Robert Hasbrouck; daughter Ellie, 2½; and Belle, a collie-shepherd mix.

Education: Menchville High School; University of Florida and Virginia Commonwealth University for undergraduate degrees; Medical College of Virginia for medical school; Riverside Regional Medical Center for internship; and Medical University of South Carolina for dermatology residency.

SUMMER SKIN CARE

Wear your sunscreen. Find a sunscreen you like. If something is thick, stinky or sticky, you are less likely to use it frequently. One to two ounces of sunscreen, about the size of a golf ball, covers your body and needs to be reapplied every two to four hours. So, obviously, one tube of sunscreen shouldn't last much more than a weekend at the beach. Also, overcast days provide plenty of harmful rays so remember your sunscreen when it's cloudy outdoors.

Protect your lips and ears. Skin cancers in these areas are often aggressive so wear a hat over your ears and/or use sunscreen on these vulnerable parts.

Seek shade. Cover up with clothing. A typical cotton t-shirt only provides protection equal to about an SPF 15 sunscreen and when wet, it can drop to an SPF of 8. Sun-protective clothing is ideal if you dislike lathering up with lotion – especially great for kids who won't stand still as well as athletes and outdoorsmen. Some of these fabrics are as light as tissue paper and provide optimal ventilation.

Learn to perform a good skin exam. Look for anything that appears out of place. Learn the warning signs for melanoma, as well

as basal or squamous cell skin cancers; google or www.aiderm.com – for photos.

Schedule checkups. Get a baseline exam by a dermatologist to ensure your skin stays healthy.

– Dermatologist Leslie Coker of Hampton

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